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LITERATURE

Dante at a distance

By Roger Scruton

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85035 273 X

DANTE:
The Divine Comedy
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GEORGE HOLMES:
Dante
104pp. Oxford University Press, 95p
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It would be no exaggeration to say that *The Divine Comedy* owes as much to Dante as to any single writer in Eliot's native tongue. Nor is this an accident; on the contrary, the Dantean quality of *Four Quartets* is integral to its achievement. Modern poetry grew from the attempt to abandon poetic dictation and write of the "unhappy consciousness" in the language which belongs to it. It reached fruition when that language, uneasy, embarrassed though it was, began to bear the weight of ideas which transcended and measured its uncertainties. It is a stylistic achievement, while dignified enough to convey such a moral idea, that achievement was Dante's. It was also Eliot's.

When Eliot had acquired his style, he felt obliged to repudiate Milton (perhaps the only great poet to have been a crypto-Italian without also being crypto-Catholic). The reasons that he offered (and which were endorsed by Leavis, and so by a whole generation of critics and writers) were odd, and in some ways insupportable. But the motive for the gesture is clear. It was necessary to dissociate Dante and Milton, first as versifiers, secondly as thinkers. The superficial resemblance between them, in the evoked by their nineteenth-century admirers, points in the direction of political and theological commitment. But the Miltonic style is elevated and sublime, unsuited to the poetry of unbelief. By contrast, Dante combines plain speaking and noble sentiment; he never loses either the unlikeness which defines him, or the vision which draws him on. This suggests a model of poetic style suited to the expression of metaphysical doubt. The orderliness of Dante's verse, to represent an achievement that is stylistic and spiritual at once. It is as though the poet rose to felicity through the purification of sinfulness. So he served as a model for the attempt, seriously undertaken by Eliot, Stevens and Pound, to bring order to the experience of unbelief by bringing order to its language.

The stylistic distinction between Milton and Dante needs no comment. But there is a distinction of vision that in part serves to explain it. The power of Milton is a power more muscular than intellectual; his language, abstracted from the spoken tongue, seems, like the Word of God, to create rather than to regard its subject-matter. It sends out a vision into infinite space, which proceeds unimpeded by the preoccupations of mortality. Milton's paradise is human, but without the contingencies of human life. His paths and beauty stand outside the realm of local emotions. Dante's verse, by contrast, ranges freely through all human experience, and is never so far advanced in abstraction as to lose contact with a particular place and a particular time.

This does not mean that Dante is less universal than Milton. On the contrary, his universality is of a higher order, precisely because the vision stems from end makes room for what is most ephemeral. Dante was unconcerned to be of any time except his own, and he wished to understand his time completely, describing a highly specific historical condition in terms of the eternal truths to which he was a witness. He therefore tried to preserve the particularity of his subject-matter, in a language which still moved with the logic of abstract thought.

It is for this "peculiarity" of vision that there arose the peculiarity of style. Just as he saw the full of man in terms of the spiritual dissolution of his native city, so did he translate the observations of Thomistic philosophy into a commentary upon his own personal pilgrimage. This reconciling of fragmentary experience with a redeeming ideal was an inspiration to Eliot. In his early essay *Eliot* had praised Dante's ability to turn philosophy into vision. But this praise concealed his own longing, partly fulfilled in *Four Quartets*, to turn vision into philosophical truth.

It is not, then, surprising to find that Dante has become, as it were, a canonical part of English literature. C. H. Sisson's translation into colloquial free verse is testimony to this canonization, and it provides the opportunity to reflect on the contemporary significance of the heroic style. Sisson's translation of the *Divine Comedy* is an attempt to make Dante with his legitimate heirs. It has to be remembered, in considering these translations, that Anglo-Saxon interest in Dante had long preceded the Eliotian revolution in taste. The *Divine Comedy* was translated innumerable times during the last century, and into every available poetic idiom, from Cary's blank verse with the fluency of Longfellow. These translations accounted for the flowering of Dante scholarship in England, which involved one of our great prime ministers (Gladstone), led to the foundation of the Oxford Dante Society, inspired Edward Moore's musical setting of the *Divine Comedy*, and culminated in the Temple Classics edition of the *Comedy*, which has made succeeding generations familiar with the text and its interpretation. This edition, edited jointly with Dorothy Sayers's *Unconquered Purgatory*, has given the English reader a model of serious effort to read the original. Its succinct and scholarly notes are due largely to the unassuming Rev. P. H. Wicksteed, who introduced Tennyson to the English reading public and refuted, in a review of *Dee Capital*, the labour theory of value.

It stands as a testimony to the culture and open-mindedness of the Edwardian educated class, and shows an understanding of Dante's theology and politics which are hard to improve upon without writing at considerable length. There is no reason to think that the Italian text is slightly (but times significantly) corrupt, and that the scholarship is too succinct for the educated modern reader to bear. This would surely be everyone's preferred edition of the *Comedy*.

It seems to me, therefore, that the best way to become acquainted with Dante is through the Temple Classics edition. There is more to be learned from it than from any short introduction, and there is little in George Holmes's workmanlike volume for the *Past Masters* series which would lead one to recommend it as an alternative. It is a pity that the editors have written an introduction to Dante in some form other than footnotes. It is indeed far from easy. What is one introducing? The poetry? The life? The philosophy? The criticism? The political doctrine? All these are, in some way, part of the quality that makes Dante so surprising in an introductory text should have to select among them. Nevertheless it would seem natural to give priority to theology, and this is precisely the realm in which Mr Holmes seems least sure of himself.

He is under the impression that Aristotle did not believe in God, whereas it was, in part, Aristotle's metaphysical vision of the deity that inspired Aquinas's and therefore Dante's philosophy. Holmes

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It stands as a testimony to the culture and open-mindedness of the Edwardian educated class, and shows an understanding of Dante's theology and politics which are hard to improve upon without writing at considerable length. There is no reason to think that the Italian text is slightly (but times significantly) corrupt, and that the scholarship is too succinct for the educated modern reader to bear. This would surely be everyone's preferred edition of the *Comedy*.

first impulse of love is therefore sensual, and it has the human body—or more precisely, the human face—as its object. It is the condition of Beatrice that leads Dante on through Paradise, and which reveals to him the Love of which she is the refraction. So erotic love points towards God; but its sensual beginnings contain a temptation. (Without that temptation, it could not be free, just as Adam could not have loved God freely but he means to disobey.) If a man sinks, like Dante, into carnal desire, then his will is perverted from the object of love; he must then pass through the "refining fire" described in *Purgatorio* (and invoked in *Four Quartets*). When he reaches the reward and fulfillment of love, it is no longer an individual but a universal that he encounters. In this universal, the element of individuality remains: it remains in the smile of Beatrice, which is nobody's smile but hers, even when she is all but absorbed into the light of the Divinity.

One of the most striking of Dante's transformations of this doctrine lies in his political philosophy. He regards himself as a blessedness, being the fulfilment of an earthly will that wavered in its purpose, lies furthest from the fount of love. In a famous line he describes her renunciation: *In sua poltrona e nostra pace*; "his will is ours." There is a condemnation in this line which illustrates the thoroughness with which Dante's thought impregnates his idiom. God wills our peace, and this is what pacifies and pleases us (to resonance lost by Cary with "his will is our tranquility"). More than that, his will and our peace are not two things, but one. In obedience we find fulfillment, because obedience is the highest expression of our freedom and so brings us closest to God. To disobey is in will disharmony and to sever the soul from love. The source of peace, then, is not in the will, but in the love. It is so described that it is the punishment of ourselves, and not the veil of earthly satisfaction which temporarily conceals them, which their victims are seen inwardly to have desired.

Dante's political vision follows immediately from the thought active in *Piccarda's* epitaph. The Church, as God's will in the world, calls to us freely to adopt its yoke and so recognize that its authority binds us not through tyranny but through love. The relation between the Church and its members must be like the bond of love, one of freedom. But this, too, is a freedom in which the whole soul is engaged. It must therefore be felt, in time, as a kind of intellectual. The Church cannot impose itself by force without negating the principle of its authority.

It is imperative to distinguish then, the authority of the Church from the power of worldly princes. The power of a prince is good only to the extent that it freely aligns itself with the Church's spiritual authority; otherwise it is a perversion of power and negates the freedom of its subjects. It follows that power and authority must be separable (as the better to combine); it also follows that power should lie with princes, while for the Church authority alone is enough. In making itself a Princesdom, the Church in Rome offended against its mission. Hermony among princes will proceed not from ecclesiastical, but from secular power; hence the need for an Empire separate from the Church. From the height of this political vision Dante surveyed the world of his day and saw the same inadequacy in its political arrangements as he felt in his own personal life; in both was the same estrangement from the will of God.

For Dante, then, love is both the eternal origin and the historical essence of mankind. This is the universal meaning of the *Comedy*. Those who miss the meaning will be impressed not by the sublime vision of *Paradiso* but by those poignant episodes in the *Inferno*—Francesca da Rimini, Count Ugolino, Brunetto Latini—which represent to the Romantic mind the high points of Dante's achievement. There is in Sisson a total dedication to the original that forces his translation away from any romanticizing towards a modernism that is as close to the original as representation.

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the underlying view: bleak because behind Sisson's admiration one feels the nagging presence of unbelief. It is a great achievement to have given Dante to the modern reader in such a way that the poem's significance is placed not in its beginning but in its end. Sisson redresses the balance against ages of misreading: but he redresses it with a consequence, employing verse that is stark, cold, often deliberately uncompelling in its refusal of every rhetorical device. It is impossible not to admire the result, just as it is impossible not to wish that it were otherwise.

Dante's versification and his thought are inseparable: it is partly this that is meant by the "visionary" quality of the Comedy. The translator is faced with the task of holding verse-form and thought together so that the harmony between the saneous movement of the one and the argument of the other is preserved. Without this harmony, or rather transference, between thought and versification, the vision fades into darkness. Sisson's translation brings this problem into focus, as it does in the focus of contemporary verse. There is no doubt that Sisson understands and deeply sympathizes with the doctrines of the *Paradiso*. He expresses them indeed with the greatest clarity. Himself a constitutional theorist of some distinction and one of the most philosophical poets of our time, Sisson defers quickly to Dante's thought process, translating

it into loose rhythms responsive to abstract ideas. Hence the most beautiful moments occur not in the *Paradiso*, but in the other two canticles. Here, for example, is the beginning of the great hymn to the Virgin with which the poem ends: Virgin mother, daughter of your son, Humble and exalted beyond all other creature, You are she who made human nature, So noble, that the maker of it himself Did not seem to have himself made by it.

In your womb was lit again that love By whose warmth, in the eternal peace, This flower has germinated as it is.

There is a solemnity in these lines, and a respect for doctrine, and whatever there is of clumsiness is explained by that. The phrase "the maker of it himself" is a sentence to have himself made by it, an example. Awkward and unbending in English, it has its justification in its sense. There is no hope that our Anglo-Saxon grammar could encompass the syntactical condensation of "il suo sanie o almost so." To have himself made by it" breathes the same open air as the original: "to make himself made by it," although more ironic does not. Sisson's compromise enables us to sense Dante's

meaning: which is that no agent but God was active in this mystery. Nothing in the sound, sense or rhythm of Dante's words deviates from the meaning, or from natural Italian, while each resonance carries the reader further into the heart of a mystery which words can quite contain. It is impossible to reproach Sisson for having arrived only at the threshold where the meaning makes itself visible. Few translators even get so far. Kenneth Mackenzie's version provides an instructive counterpoint, employing as it does a gratuitous variant of the blank verse made plausible by Cary:

O Virgin Mother, daughter of your Son, Lowly and yet above all creatures raised, You did enable human nature to be, Then he who made it, he himself, made himself in your womb.

At first sight this flows more naturally (although after a hundred lines the effect begins to poll). But the sense is lost. Leaving aside the "f" stresses, as Sisson translates it, "flood" in the original; and there is no doubt as to which of those English words captures the meaning, one has only to think of the overtones of "creature." For the speaker of modern English it is

impossible in use that word to convey the sense of single agency that Dante expressed. Moreover, it is not that God deigned: he did not disdain; and the rose, which is "opened" in Mackenzie, is germinated in Dante's peace. Sisson writes with a pressure of irony at his elbow, and some of this he reveals directly in his summary of the poem's conclusion. The verse is similar; his defence of vernacular poetry and his literary self-criticism show him as concerned as any modern poet to demonstrate his up-to-dateness. Through the defence of the colloquial idiom, and through him's recognition of the significance of this defence, Dante has become for such poets as Sisson what Virgil was for Dante. He provides the model of a live poetic language.

But the achievement of the *Paradiso* is not only one of clarity: it is one of dignity and profundity in the spoken tongue. And if the aim of this attempt is truth, the means is verification. It is through verification, alone, and not through fidelity, that Dante's vision can be recaptured, even if the first step in the attempt is to write like Sisson, in a language proper to one's place and time.

What then of rhyme? Sisson dismisses the possibility of imitating the terza rima on the grounds that he would never dream of using that verse-form in any language, poem of his own. "That," he adds,

may seem a poor reason, but it is in fact a good one, as anyone will understand who has understood that a translator must write as comes natural to him, in the language of his day and in the kind of verse which helps in the current development of the language, and of his own technique. The real task is to capture the matter of Dante, as one speaks most effectively.

Sisson also thinks, with some reason, that the general differences between Italian and English make the imitation of terza rima rather like a clown following a ballet dancer. He cites Cary and Langford as proof that one can use terza rima without using rhyme at all. Nevertheless, he keeps the terza structure. So he must face a question: how far can one move away from Dante's versification and yet preserve his sense?

If Sisson avoids rhyme it is not because it is unnatural to him. It is because it is unnatural to him. The language of his own poems (the *Paradiso*) is written in a rhyme scheme of iambic pentameter. Now can he have failed to notice the importance of rhyme in giving expression to the nature of the *Comedy*? If so, he has failed. The successful translator of Dante must use rhyme as well as he can. He must pick out the vivid moments in the *Paradiso*, and the beginning and end of the *Paradiso*, where the imagery has a certain clarity and quality suitable for bold treatment. In Dante the web of rhyme persists and persists: it is the force that drives the canto through to its conclusion. It is the refrain that causes every verse to halt. It lends itself equally to the alien transgression in Hell, and to the free ascent of the spirit beyond.

To translate the *Paradiso* into blank verse is to leave only a body of doctrine obscured by a meter that denies it. When translators that had it in mind to conserve the status of the *Paradiso* as a prelude and to restore the *Paradiso* to its rightful place, they have almost invariably used rhyme as the unit of significance. In 1852 G. L. Shawcross, Provost of Oriel, began his translation of the second two canticles, using a four-line stanza. This *Paradiso* is, 1428 "per la natura lieta e d'ora / La virtù mista" is rendered:

By the glad nature whence it came This mingling doth the mass of bliss As in our gladdened sight The pupil flashes bright This is the cause, not dense and rare, Which difference makes 'twixt star and star.

This the kind source whence The brightness and the bloom. The gentle light hardly conceals the fact that in this usage rhyme destroys the meaning of the form of which it is the symbol. The lines have been shortened into a form; nothing further from Dante's contemplative movement could be imagined. Most important is that the translation now

falls out (or in) as a sequence of unlinked stanzas. Instead of the interwoven chain we have a series of stanzas. The verse is held together by the rhyme but by no sequence of ideas; so that the no longer has a function.

The same objection can be levelled against the translation of 1932, "English triple rhyme, three-line stanza, such as the use of the more vigorous modern verse, again has the effect of breaking more connections than it makes. Still less can the use of an unrhymed line be a complete answer. In P. Sisson's translation, the terza rima is at all times a conscious choice. Sisson argues against this not only because it is difficult to imitate, but because it is not a terza rima. He argues that it is not a terza rima because it is not a terza rima. He argues that it is not a terza rima because it is not a terza rima.

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LITERATURE

any hint of the urgency of Francesco's mission. The words which Dante finds for it. The terza rima acts as a full stop to every line, squeezing the syntax that precedes it. There is infinitely more flow and simplicity in Cary (published 1844, begun 1800) than in Sisson.

But at one point Alone we fell. When of that smile The widdid smile, so rapturously read, By one so deep in love, then he, From one shall separate, at once his lips All trembling kiss'd. The book and writer both Were love's purveyors. In its leaves that do

We read no more. . . . Sisson's comparison of the terza rima to an English writer that his language will bear. They also give rise to an observation that will illustrate the finer shades of meaning that any translator, who wishes to be faithful to Dante's philosophy must convey. In all these translations, even in Byron's, not otherwise notable for its fidelity, a conscious or unconscious respect is shown towards the philosophy of love. Francesco's reading of the *Paradiso* of Guinevere, desired and kissed by Lancelot. By a fine transition, she then remembers the kissing, not of her smile, but of her mouth: she also remembers Paolo's trembling kiss. "Paolo's trembling kiss," he says, "is a love which has been remembered." Mach is implied in that transition. The smile of another is the picture of his soul, the announcement of freedom: it is the signal of the divine.

Animals do not smile: at best they grin. As Milton puts it: "Smiles from reason grow, To brute denied, and ore of love the food . . ." Francesco has been aware, through Guinevere, of her own smile, since she has been aware of the freedom of choice that is prompting her (consciously) to love. Then suddenly, in the next line, she is kissing a man, and the line trembles with the reminiscence of Paolo's passion, and the loss of her freedom. It is important that she attributes this trembling to Paolo, who has been a terrible force with which she has been struggling. She is not aware of her own smile, which explains it, are jointly conveyed.

It is strange to find Sisson He, who will never be divided Kissed my mouth, and the two of us were trembling. One is inclined to respond impatiently to this, on the ground that Sisson is after all unconstrained by rhyme, and allows himself so much latitude with form that he should take some with content. It is also surprising that a translator so steeped in the thought of the *Paradiso* should not have been concerned to capture all the minute ways in which the *Paradiso* is praised in the verses of the earlier canticles. This is a pity, and in fairness it must be said that Sisson's few misrepresentations of the "matter" of Dante are mostly confined to the part—the *Inferno*—where his spirit is least willing to linger. But it leads us to an important question. Precisely what constraints of versification does Sisson, when he varies or underscores a meaning, obey? He would certainly say that if he has dropped the constraint of rhyme this is largely in order to respond affectively to constraints of another kind.

Now the best imitation of Dante's manner in modern English (the *Paradiso* in Latin passage in "Little Gidding") also disposes with rhyme, recreating the catenary effect by interwoven masculine and feminine endings:

So with your own, and pray thou By others, as I pray you to forgive Both bad and good. Last season's fruit is eaten And the full-fed beast shall kick the empty pail. For last year's words belong to And next year's words await another voice.

If the spirit of Dante is present in these lines it is for reasons other than the superficial resemblance to the terza rima. The diction has what Eliot discerned in Dante but could not find in Milton: "the slight alienation which, while it leaves a Rite statement a plain statement, is none of these variations of it."

Second, the conscious impotence/At human folly, and the recreation Of laughter/at what ceases to amuse. And last, the ending point of re-enactment. Of all that you have done, and been / (the phone) Of motives late revealed, / and the awareness Of things ill done, and done to others' harm.

Which once you took / far exercise This caesura is an integral part of the catenary effect in Dante. It is also one of the most effective ways of turning "plain statement" into verse. Consider the brief description, in

the opening canto, of the church of Rome: Ed una lupa, che di tutte brame Sembrava carca, nella sua magrezza.

E mole enorme / e' gio' viver grame. If you translate this literally, you get something like this: And a she-wolf, who with every craving in her lean-meat Seemed to me over-burdened in live in sorrow. All three features of the Dantesque line remain: the eleven-syllable movement, the feminine endings, and the slight caesura. Sisson deliberately avoids them. He also gives a new twist to the meaning: And a she-wolf, who seemed, in her thinness, To have nothing but excessive appetites. And she has already made many miserable.

After ten or so such tercets I begin to wish for some hesitancy in the verse, something that will stop each line from running itself out. Is it that I have failed to catch some other, more subtle movement, in Sisson's verse, or am I right in thinking that the discipline of Dante can be recalled in more traditional ways? In any event I cannot escape the impression that for some reason, this translation is nearer to prose than to verse, and that the division into tercets produces a kind of arbitrariness precisely where Dante made his greatest bid for order. (The caesura is not more respected by Mackenzie, but the momentum of his rhythms and the subtle movement, which he transcribes the imagery are such that the translation can bear no comparison with Sisson.)

In a recent poem in the TLS, Donald Davie (addressing Senatus Heaney) wrote: I think Sisson Go it, don't you? Plain Dante, And if flat, flat. The abhorrent, Ask to be wholly plain. Dante was never plain, although Sisson often is. Dante achieved harmony between what he thought and what he saw, and what he saw was a meaning that no mere "platitude" can reach. Davie is clearly a romantic: he reads the vision as a vision of hell, reaching only by a stretch of the intellect towards the light. In Sisson, however, it is the language of the *Paradiso* that is described most persuasively. The verse, which flows through the spirit of the poem. What seems like flatness is not really flatness of thought, but a kind of persistent undercurrent of despair. Sisson cannot quite believe in Dante's vision. Therefore he removes from his vocabulary every rhetorical gesture, everything that might imply a self-induced effort of emotion. This explains the loss of poetic devices, and the constant refusal to enact any metrical order. Sisson, like Eliot, has seen the significance of Dante for the poetry of unbelief. But instead of using Dante's versification to transcend despair, he reduces it to a wholly new kind of "plain statement." Thus his translation is the most sincere, the most modern, and yet in some ways the most distanced, from the original that I know.

The Poetry of Nature—Rural Perspectives in Poetry from Wordsworth to the Present (1980, University of Toronto Press, 0.800.5494.3), by W. J. Keith, a lecturer in English at the University of Toronto, is, as the author puts it in his preface, "a book about what poets have when men and mountains (and other natural objects) meet, and the encounter is recorded in verse." This kind of simplicity and directness is characteristic of Keith's critical approach and style. There are chapters on Wordsworth, Clara, William Barnes, Hardy, Frost, and Edward Thomas, and a concluding one called "The Georgians and After," which takes into the account Edmund Spenser, Andrew Young and R. S. Thomas. That account "sees the poets and poetry" treated here as "a loose but not polypous" group of poets who have been grouped together because of being examined in sequence. Clove, well-informed and intelligent readings of individual poems support the argument, and there are more discursive treatments of themes linking poets to the tradition, discussed in a way that is under headings such as "Varieties of 'I'" in Wordsworth and Frost, "The Language of the Community" in Barrow, and "Interior Meditation" in Edward Thomas.

One cannot help wondering why Sisson is so determined, therefore, to maintain the division into tercets, which follows the original syllabic movement, is accidental; there is no sense of metrical constraint here, such as we find in Eliot.

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The option of difficulties

By Michael Carver

RONALD LEVIN:

The Chief
Field Marshal Lord Wavell
Commander-in-Chief and Viceroy,
1939-1947
282pp. Hutchinson. £7.95.
0 09 142500 X

As a young officer in the Middle East in the early years of the Second World War, it would not be an exaggeration to say that I worshipped Wavell. To me, and in most of my contemporaries, he was all that a general should be: the very opposite of the pompous, bull-in-a-china-shop general of the First World War, who still existed, indeed appeared to predominate in the army of the 1930s. At Sandhurst we had studied Allenby's Palestine campaign in Wavell's book and admired it. We knew that he favoured mechanisation and mobility and was friendly with the principal apostle, Liddell Hart: that he approved of T. E. Lawrence and supported irregular and unorthodox approaches to warfare. He had a simple, direct attitude to life and was a soldier's soldier, preferring the simplicity of the battlefield to the pompous of Cairo. The fact that he had been a scholar at Winchester, dedicated to the classics and poetry, was a further recommendation to me personally. In our eyes his prime responsibility for the conquest of the Sudan, the capture of the Nile, and the preparation of the Battle of Sidi Barrani in December 1940, which implicated the role of Graziani's forces in Libya, crowned him with laurels.

When, after that, the heavens began to fall about him, with the disasters of Greece and Crete, the loss of Somaliland and Cyrenaica, the successive failures to relieve besieged Tobruk, the difficulties and arguments over operations in Syria and Iraq—these only relieved by the successful campaign in Ethiopia—and his final dismissal to India, where a further succession of defeats and failures dogged his footsteps, we looked at him on the public screen. They were believed, had been accepted, even commiserated after another with his inadequate resources, the latter the result of the failure to equip the armed forces sufficiently in the years before the war, or to organize his equipment properly once war had started. Wavell was the cavalier *non gratus* of our reproach, who had to shoulder the burden of his best with the exiguous resources allotted to him. Finally, as Viceroy, his advice was ignored, and when he was finally dismissed and succeeded by Mountbatten, the latter could only make the best of the mess created by the failure of successive governments to listen to and act on Wavell's advice.

The first indication that there were flaws in this ideal view came with the first volume of John Cornwell's biography, *Wavell: Soldier and Statesman* (1964). Although favourable to Wavell, it revealed that some of his major decisions were open to question. Deeper study of the history of those times, and subsequent revelations, produced a further doubt: until I, for one, began to feel that in spite of Wavell's sterling qualities, some of his most important decisions were wrong, and to realize that it was not the case that he had been forced into them against his better military judgement by pressure from Churchill.

Ronald Levin's brilliant book bears this out. While he clearly has great admiration for Wavell as a man, and as a soldier, he is scrupulously objective, and fair in analysing his decisions and attitudes. Cornwell's book, *Wavell: Soldier and Statesman* (1964), although favourable to Wavell, it revealed that some of his major decisions were open to question. Deeper study of the history of those times, and subsequent revelations, produced a further doubt: until I, for one, began to feel that in spite of Wavell's sterling qualities, some of his most important decisions were wrong, and to realize that it was not the case that he had been forced into them against his better military judgement by pressure from Churchill.

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to East Africa, the Sudan or shipping in the Red Sea, and could have been cheaply convinced and left to either army, harassed by an externally supported resistance movement. If the resources devoted to that campaign had been made available in Egypt, Cyrenaica might not have been lost in 1941. In the end, Greece and Crete might also have been different. Levin himself inclines to that view, but his clear and realistic analysis shakes him out of it. It was not lack of infantry that led to the loss of Cyrenaica, Greece and Crete, but lack of tanks and artillery, especially anti-tank and anti-aircraft artillery, and of air support. But few of these were deployed in Ethiopia: nor, as Levin correctly argues, did the replacement of 4th Indian by 6th Australian Division after the victory of Sidi Barrani in December 1940 have any effect on O'Connor's lightning campaign in the desert, unnerving as it may have been for him at the time. Far from being pushed by Churchill into Greece against his better judgement, it was Wavell's favourable recommendation which swayed the doubting Cabinet and Chiefs of Staff. If he was influenced by anyone, it was by Eden, for whom Levin has nothing good to say. That the decision was a major military mistake cannot be contested.

In struggling to stem the Japanese flood in South-East Asia, Wavell was in an unenviable position of being in supreme command, but without resources either of information or of men to contribute to any of his subordinates. He could only try to steel their resolve in the almost unattainable dykes. His fall over the defence of Kunming, but he would have been rightly condemned if he had merely encouraged his subordinates to throw in the sponge at an earlier stage.

Levin expresses surprise that such an intelligent, well-educated

out experienced man, who was well versed in history, should have allowed himself to be misled by personal factors in the conduct of affairs, with the result that his relations with Churchill, the Americans and the Chinese were almost universally bad. Once he himself became a political figure, as Viceroy, a remarkable change took place, although it did not improve his relations with Churchill. In his opening chapter, which should be read again once one has finished the book, Levin seeks the clue in the many paradoxes in Wavell, in his character and upbringing. The classical education of a scholar at Winchester, and the military training of a soldier, the Greek image of the hero, struggling against the whims of the Gods and of Fate—these, as well as that of the Roman citizen, homed by his duty to the state and his ancestors.

The former image had been reinforced by his love of poetry, and also by the romanticism of the Scottish Highlands, the latter by the traditions of the army in which he had been brought up as a soldier's son and had served all his life. One of his favourite sayings was that war was an option of difficulties. One is led to feel that Wavell welcomed the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune because they presented him with a challenge that demanded all the toughness of character which, in his life, he knew lectures in 1939, he rightly claimed to be essential to a good commander.

Levin's book is not a full biography, but an analysis of Wavell on the lines of his previous books on Remond and Montgomery. It is a military commander and on Churchill's military and political life. It is a military commander and on Churchill's military and political life. It is a military commander and on Churchill's military and political life.

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"And thus without life's conscious torturing pain, in some sweet flow we will feel the sun, and from the future's throat will sing again, as two gemmed snakes will run their way, or as two lilies creep, through the hot jungle where the yellow-eyed huge has sleep, and give their battle!" Mervyn Peck's illustration for the book 'Wavell: Soldier and Statesman'.

Between tyranny and chaos

By Philip Mason

DOM MORAES:

Mrs Gandhi
336pp with 29 photographs. Corgi.
£9.50.
0 24 101007 6

A biographer should be a little bit in awe of his subject, or he should be puzzled by the contradictions, by the processes of decision, by the essential ambiguity of the hero. Mr Mason is a little bit in awe of Mrs Gandhi. He is puzzled by the contradictions, by the processes of decision, by the essential ambiguity of the hero. Mr Mason is a little bit in awe of Mrs Gandhi. He is puzzled by the contradictions, by the processes of decision, by the essential ambiguity of the hero.

The book begins with a sketch of the historical background of the Gandhi family, in which there are quite a few inaccuracies. The ruler "throw" in his lot with the rebels in 1857; he had been deposed and exiled for his role in the 1857 rebellion. The ruler "throw" in his lot with the rebels in 1857; he had been deposed and exiled for his role in the 1857 rebellion.

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Preparing to withdraw

By Hugh Tinker

NICHOLAS MANSEGH and
FREDERICK MOON (Editors):
The Transfer of Power 1947-47
Constitutional Relations Between
Britain and India
Volume 9: The Fixing of a Time
Limit 4 November 1946-22 March
1947
1,053pp. Her Majesty's Stationary
Office. £35.
0 11 580084 0

Can the past be translated into contemporary experience? How can we find truth, authenticity, reality? Can the recent past be brought to life through old films and new records or through the reminiscences of those actors who are still alive? Or is this technique too vulnerable to the prejudice of editor or narrator, as in all those features about the Depression of the 1930s? The historical and traditional attempt at rediscovery, through the contemporary documents—letters, newspapers, records of conversations and discussions: Can these dry bones bring back life? Or are the documents themselves the bones which disguise reality? Is not even the bald, immediate statement already a justification, an apology, an afterthought, a device for fixing or being fixed?

Perhaps the answer is to assemble all the documents together, covering every point of view, each stage of formulation, from first draft to final pronouncement, and including the plans which turned to nothing, or went wrong, as well as those which won the day. That, at any rate, appears to be the philosophy of the Transfer of Power series. And now, this massive enterprise draws towards a climax. Volume 9 appeared a decade ago; the ultimate volume is still some three years distant. But the present instalment, Volume 9, brings us to the dénouement. When Churchill reached the beginning of the end in his history of the Second World War he entitled that volume *The Hinge of Fate*. The present work is similar. It is not so much that great events occur, but that the momentous consequences will flow from the decisions now recorded.

The volume covers a bare five months in the bitter winter of 1946-1947 and for India the outstanding event was the announcement by the Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, on February 20, 1947, that British rule would come to an end. It was a decision which would come to an end. It was a decision which would come to an end. It was a decision which would come to an end.

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first eighteen months that Labour were in office.

He moved slowly, whether in reaction to the urgent, increasingly loud calls from the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, or in response to the mercenary projects devised by that wily acknowledged Indian expert in the Cabinet, Sir Stafford Cripps.

In India, the attempt to get Congress and the Muslim League to work together had produced an interim government; virtually, a semi-independent Cabinet. However, this had merely accentuated the differences between the two parties. Jawaharlal Nehru, who saw himself as the Prime Minister at the head of this uneasy Cabinet, attributed much of the difficulty to the reluctance of Wavell and his British officials. Stiff letters to the Viceroy produced stiff replies. Nehru insisted that the Constituent Assembly, provided in the Cabinet of 1930, should meet in full. But the plan had incorporated an ingenious scheme invented by Cripps to give the Muslims regional autonomy; and this essential element was rejected by Nehru. To resolve the impasse, the Indian leaders flew to London with the Viceroy to thrash things out with Attlee's Cabinet.

The attempt failed; the gulf of hostility and suspicion between Nehru and Jinnah was unbridgeable. Attlee and his ministers went on deliberating with Wavell on means to regain the initiative, meeting almost daily from December 5 and 20. Cripps declared that the British Government should announce that it would leave India in a year's time. From his side, Wavell also argued that there must be a withdrawal before the administrative machinery was broken. He named March, 1948, as the date to aim for. Here was a curious alliance between two men who had almost always differed.

Among the Ministers who objected to this arbitrary ending of British rule, those of working-class origin were most vociferous. A. V. Alexander insisted that the obligations of the minorities must be fulfilled. Ernest Bevin emphasized that "there must be millions of Indians who... would welcome a strong and unambiguous lead." Not only in India, but in Malaya, Ceylon and the Middle East, as well as in the African territories, it was a question of "a strong line." Coldly, the Prime Minister insisted that if he objected Bevin must come up with an alternative plan.

Attlee's own plan was to replace the man in the driving seat. As early as December 18 Attlee had made an announcement that Lord Mountbatten, though he did not formally approach the King until January 29, and that still kept the matter from his Cabinet colleagues. Mr Attlee, despite outward diffidence, possessed a ruthless streak. He did not hesitate to dismiss Lord Wavell, despite his enormous standing as a war leader, just as a few months earlier he had unhesitatingly got rid of Dornham, Smith, Governor of Burma, when he was adjudged wanting.

There was something inspired in the choice of Mountbatten, a controversial and contradictory figure. He was autocratic, ruthless also, when required, yet with an almost instinctive empathy for the post-war tide of egalitarian feeling and a strong sense of the forces of Asian nationalism. Unlike the aloof Wavell he was as sensitive as any modern politician to the importance of the media in getting across his message.

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This was the man who, according to the February 20 announcement, would shortly go to Delhi.

In his last days at the Viceroy's House, Wavell behaved with the stoical dignity whereby he had survived so many onslaughts. Mountbatten was already getting into top gear, assembling, planning, proposing.

While all this was happening in London, in India the politics of the council chamber was giving way to the politics of blood in the streets. Hundreds were killed in communal clashes in East Bengal; thousands died in Bihar; and some hundreds of thousands were to die in the Punjab. It had long been a maxim of the Congress leadership that communal divisions were caused by British overlordship. Now, grim reality caused a shift of attitude. On March 9, Nehru wrote a long letter to Wavell in which the tactlessness and disdain of much of their correspondence was discarded. He informed the Viceroy that the Congress intended to meet the Muslim League to discuss terms for League participation in the Constituent Assembly: if that failed, they would suggest a course of action which would involve friction and conflict. This would entail the division of the Punjab, and also Bengal into two parts. Recent events have demonstrated that it is not possible to coerce the non-Muslim minority in the Province, just as it is not possible or desirable to coerce the others.

By these words, did Nehru foresee, however reluctantly, that some sort of partition was inevitable? There was still a long way to go before he could swallow the nasty pill of Pakistan. But the first shift had been made.

Well, it is all here in these sumptuous and splendid pages, elegantly supported by an architectural framework of historical reference which the editors have woven with perfect fact. Is this really the best it has ever been? Or are we brought nearer to reality by the keynote of revolution of a book like *Freedom at Midnight*? For everyone who studies the volume under review five hundred pages later, the account by Levy Collins and Dominique Leprieux. Yet this is not just an account to the general. Anyone who has time and patience to command will discover something of the whole gamut of who gets what out of this volume. For this is not history fudged and trimmed; this is what the editors found on the ground, as the civil servants and the politicians left. It is certainly an authentic slice of the past, even if it is still not the whole past.

Volume 18 of the Second Series of Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, edited by W. N. Medhurst and Douglas Dakin, assisted by Gillian Bennett, has recently been published (1,027pp. Her Majesty's Stationary Office, £10 0 11 590193 0). This volume covers European affairs January 2-June 30 when the dominant concern was with the growing strength of the new Germany and the Spanish civil war complicated by both Fascist and Soviet interventions, seemed the most likely area of great-power conflict in Europe. The documents also illustrate Neville Chamberlain's hopes of a rapprochement with Germany.

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Something to be afraid of

By Graham Hough

YIFU TUAN:
Landscapes of Fear
262pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £10.
0 531 12821 2

Yifu Tuan is Professor of Geography in the University of Minnesota. Most of us since school days have a fairly elastic idea of what is comprised by the science of geography; but even so it is clear that Professor Tuan interprets his commission in a peculiarly liberal fashion, so that it becomes something much more like the history of ideas than a description of the physical world. A quotation from David Lowenthal used as an epigraph to one of his earlier books will set the tone: "The geography of the world is unfilled only by human logic and optics, by the light and colour of artifice, by decorative arrangement, and by ideas of the good, the true and the beautiful".

The *Hydrological Cycle* and the *Widow of God* (1968) were straightforward historical essays on natural theology of the Ray-Darwin-Paley kind—the wisdom of God demonstrated from his works in creation: the particular work in question being the hydrological cycle by which water is drawn from the sea by evaporation and returned to it by rain and rivers. Tuan's book traces the evolution both of the scientific understanding of the process and of the reflection of this in theological ideas; and this restricted topic serves as an excellent example of the natural theology of the Christian enlightenment.

His later work takes a much broader sweep. *Topophilia* (1974) has for its subtitle "A study of environmental perception, attitudes, and values", and it attempts nothing less than a survey of man's mental attitudes to his physical environment, unrestricted as to place and time. Unrestricted in its scope, the discipline by which the inquiry is to be pursued—the psychology of perception, anthropology or social history. To do justice to this theme would surely require something about the length of *The Golden Bough*; *Topophilia* is a book of 250 pages, and it remains a sketch of a vast and fascinating idea, too packed with heterogeneous matter for an essay, but not sufficiently organized or developed to fulfill the promise of its title.

Landscapes of Fear is built on another vast and alluring idea—a examination of fear among different cultures and peoples from prehistory to the present. Tuan's geographical associations, the nature of his previous works, and the presence of the term "landscape" in the title all lead one to expect that the book will concern itself with fear inspired by man's physical surroundings, landscapes felt as threatening, threatening or hostile. But this turns out not to be so: "landscape" is used purely as a metaphor, and the subject is simply fear. In general, the anatomy of fear, like *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, is a lost for which the geographical focus goes it is even more difficult than in *Topophilia* to decide what kind of a search we are embarked on. Child psychology, ethnology, the belief in witches and ghosts, public executions and the treatment of criminals and the insane succeed each other with remarkable rapidity, and the concept of fear which should be the unifying factor proves to be rather too capacious a receptacle to hold them together. Again the appropriate model would seem to be a vast encyclopaedia work of some kind; but *Landscapes of Fear*, in spite of its vastness of references, is a shorter book than *Topophilia*, and it is not at all encyclopaedic. His formidable array of folk divers is not arranged according to any system.

We begin with the instinctive unlearned fears of infancy, and pass on to the fears imposed on children by their elders, either from cat or dog or deliberately, as a means of training. This looks as though we are in for a study of the way in which the past played by fear in the develop-

ment of the individual life. But no; in the next chapter we start on a new tack—the society without fear, exemplified in the pygmies of the Congo, who apparently live in their rain-forest, which they never leave, as if bailed in a warm henpen. Other examples of lowly food-gatherers are adduced; lives that are despotically deprived, by all outside standards—but without fear, for the livelihood, exiguous as it is, is sufficient and unfeeling. By contrast, the lives of hunters and early farmers, though richer and more developed, are fear-ridden. The hunters are obsessed by fear of the scarcity or disappearance of their game, the farmers by crop failure and climatic disaster.

We seem here to be on the verge of a new classification of societies by their attitudes to fear, cutting across the usual groupings by occupation or state of development. However, this is taken no further, and from here on the book becomes fairly frankly a miscellany—each chapter on a single topic, but with no clear connection between them. Natural Calamities, Fear in the Medieval World, Fear of Disease, Fear of Witches, Fear in the City, Exile and Confinement—these are some of the chapter-headings. They are selected on no apparent principle, objects of fear, its temporal distribution, its locale are all rolled in indifferently while a good deal of the material is less about fear than the causes of fear—a catalogue of disasters rather than an analysis of their fear-producing effects.

This is all a bit of a puzzle, and is very far from the scholarly tracing of a single idea that we find in *The Hydrological Cycle*. But perhaps we had better stop puzzling and simply accept what we are given.

Tuan writes richly and vividly, his reading is diverse and extensive, and he assembles an array of historical and anthropological bric-a-brac, beliefs, anecdotes and reports of research that never fail to interest. Probably every reader will find some part of the material familiar, which part depending on his own particular interests. Readers of the English novel or of English social history will find nothing new in the chapters on executions and the treatment of criminals. I suppose anthropologists will know about the ritualized lives of the pygmies. And the passages on supernatural fears, witches and ghosts are not as beyond common knowledge. But few people will know all of it, and no one has seen it brought together in this particular way. The result is a sort of diachronic and panethnic Reader's Digest, picking up items of interest from all over time and space, and for those far whom jumble sales have an unending appeal, which means nearly everybody, the result is undeniably attractive.

However, it is clearly meant to be something more. There was a point in his earlier work where Tuan seemed about to invent a new genre—*Psycho-geography*, you might call it—which promises to open up a new and interesting view of the world. It never happened. He has cast his net too wide and forgone the opportunity given by expertise in a special information from this huge verity of evidence is that too much of it is necessarily second-hand: it is a welter of the vixen's touch of humanity and personal knowledge, which never arrives. There are great books not written by moderate and sensible men, they are written by obsessional. Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* is his only work, and a cento of quotations as it is, he was driven to it by the need to cure his affliction in himself.

Tuan is no manic phobologist; then the rest of us, indeed the main general reflection inspired by his book is that considering how much there is to be afraid of we are on the whole remarkably unaffected.

In a time of dry and ultimately flimsy speculations it is good to see a writer bold enough to take on a large topic that cuts across conventional boundaries. But in setting out on such a quest it is unwise to leave any of professional over-riding behind. Somewhere between *Topophilia* and *Landscapes of Fear*, Professor Tuan seems to have dropped his ball. It is to be hoped that he will go back and pick them up again.

Swifts

Spring comes a little, a little. All April it rains.
The new hawes stick in their fists. New ferns, still fiddleheads.
But one thing the swifts are back. Face to the sun like a child
You shout. "The swifts are back!"

Sure enough, but backs bow to carry me sky scurrier
Two hundred miles an hour across fullblown windfields.
Swoooooooweeeee, swoooooooweeeee. Another. And another.

It's the cut air falling in shrieks on our chimneys and roofs.

The next day a fleet of high crosses cruises in ether.
These are the air pilgrims, pilots of air rivers.
A shift of wing and suddenly they're earth-skimmers, duggers.
But skilful, guiding the throw of themselves away from themselves.

Quick flutter, a scimitor swoop, out of danger of touch, for
Earth is forbidden to them, water's forbidden in their
All air and fire, little nimble acrobats, they outfly sturms.
They rush to the pillars of nature, the thermal fountains.

Here is a legend of swifts, a parable:—

When the great Raven bent over Earth to create the birds
The swifts were ungrateful. They were small muddy things
Like shoes, with long legs and short wings, so

They took themselves off in the mountains to sulk.
And they stayed there. "Well," said the Raven, after years of this,
"I will give you the sky, you can have the whole sky
On condition that you give up rest."

"Yes, yes," screamed the swifts. "We abhor rest.
We detest the filth of growth, the sweat of sleep.
Soft nests in the wet fields, slushlike of worms.
Let us be free, he air!"

So the Raven took their legs and bound them into their bodies.
He bent their wings like hammerings, heated them like knives.
He streamlined their feathers and stripped them of pelvis.
Then he set them loose with Never to Return inscribed on their feet
and wings.

And so, we have swifts. Though in reality
Not purbles but bolts in the world's web, swift
Swifts, not in punishment, not in ecstasy, simply
Sleepers over oceans in the mill of the world's weaving.

The grace in say they live in another firmament,
A way to say, "The miracle cannot occur"
And watch the miracle.

This is the truth of swifts, the gifts of swifts.

Anne Stevenson

Information please

- J. A. Blackwell (1798-1886), author, entrepreneur, Irish agent and diplomatist: any information, letters, writings, etc.
Thomas Kuhnle, The John Rylands University Library of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL.
- Augustus Leopold Egg, RA (1816-1883), Victorian artist: unpublished letters or documents by him or mentioning him, and the location of his paintings in private collections, for a doctoral dissertation.
H. Peaborn, History of Art, Yale University, Box 2009, Yale Station, New Haven, Connecticut 06520.
- John S. Farnier: any information relating to him which proves or disproves that the spiritualist writer of this name in the 1880s was the same person who was associated with W. E. Henley in *Song and his Analogues*.
E. J. Dingwall, 171 Marine Court, St. Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex.
- Franz Kafka (1883-1924): any unpublished letters, reminiscences, etc. for a new biography to be published by Weldon and Nicolson.
Ronald Hayman, 25 Church Row, London NW3.
- Hugh Henry Ross, Baron Strathnairn (1801-1888), publisher and diplomat: whereabouts of any letters or papers, not in public collections, for a biography.
J. S. Anderson, 78 Highbury Road, Glasgow G12 9EN.
- Robert Robinson Ross (1869-1918), Canadian-born critic, biographer, editor, and confidant of Oscar Wilde: information on any unpublished material by or about Ross.
J. Thomas, Box 3130, MPO, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6R 3X6.
- Ruskin and St Mark's: whereabouts of MS notes, sketches, drawings, any information, personal reminiscences, etc., from anyone who doggerelized by Ruskin and assistant, for a book on Ruskin's study of the building.
John Moran, Atkinson College, York University, Downsview, Ontario.
- Philip Stanhope, Fourth Earl of Chesterfield (1694-1773), author of *Letters to His Son*: any unpublished letters, other material or information for biographical study.
Louise Duxton, 44 Bromham Gardens, London SW5 0HQ.
- Alfred Brody (1895-?), Russian-born American Jewish poet who wrote about the Lower East Side: any biographical information about him, for a note in an anthology.
Anthony Rudin, 23 Fitzwarren Gardens, London N19 3TR.
- Edward Child (1840-1930), Rationist and folklorist: whereabouts of letters, manuscripts, photographs, and other items, for an exhibition and biography.
Peter Baker, Clewer, Hurlbrook Road, Sutton, Ipswich.
- Lancelot Haynes (1753-1833), Afro-American Congregational clergyman: verification of the statement that his well-known sermon against Universalism, *Universal Salvation* (1805), was circulated widely in England.
Richard Newman, c/o Garland Publishing, Inc, 136 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016.
- 1948 siege of Jerusalem: information from any eye-witnesses to the siege or from any officers or instructors seconded to the Legion who were in Jerusalem at the time.
James McNeish, 35 Forside Road, London SW12 6LN.
- Delinda Lee (1933-1961), actress: any information, personal reminiscences, etc., from anyone who knew her, copies of letters or photographs, and whereabouts of additional biographical data, especially on her private life and career; for a study of her personality, career and times.
R. G. Fedde, Via Foligno 78-10, 10149 Torino, Italy.
- The good ship *Leopard*: this author, publisher of a children's story poem (c. 1911) begins: "The good ship *Leopard* was taken a journey out to sea".
Geoffrey Gilson, Broad Town Farmhouse, Road, Tunst, Swindon, Wiltshire.
- London Mercury*: for a new edition of Yeats's poems, whereabouts of any archives or information on the magazine's editorial policies in 1938-39.
Richard J. Flanagan, English Department, Northeast College, New Orleans, Louisiana 70118.
- Katherine Philips (1632-1664), known as "The Matchless Orinda": whereabouts of manuscripts of her poems and translations, as well as letters, diaries, and biographical documents.
Catherine C. M. Mambretti, 51 South Seventh Avenue, La Grange, Illinois 60525.
- John Ruskin and Charles Eliot Norton: we are co-editing the letters of John Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton and would be grateful if anyone possessing any relevant knowledge of, or relevant manuscripts would contact us.
John L. Bradley, Church Cottage, Hinton, George, Somerset TA17 8SA.
- Clarendon Street, 1872-1970: whereabouts of any early manuscripts, proofs, annotated books, or letters for inclusion in or use in the *Clarendon Papers*.
Kenneth Blackwell, Russell, Editorial Project, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario.

POETRY

D. J. ENRIGHT:
The Oxford Book of Contemporary Verse 1945-80
299pp. Oxford University Press.
£7.50.
0 19 21408 2

He woke intending to write a long poem. For during a profound sleep, brought on by a prescribed snoddy, he had "the most vivid confidence that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines: if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as things." He did manage to get the poem's setting on to the page, but only fifty verses in all. Dissatisfied, he prefaced them with a prose gloss to assure us that he published the fragment at a great price, urging since he himself considered it a "psychological curiosity" rather than a work possessed of "poetic merits". None the less, psychology and all those verses and their gloss constitute a fascinating, prophetic composition. The enigma in "Kobla Khan" not only of poetry and prose but of disparate levels of discourse—the matter of fact, focus on the person, with the ultra-poetic—anticipates something of the texture of modern works—*The Colossus* and *Potter's* say, and the poem itself anticipates those works' disjunctions as well.

A basic part of its charm, in fact, resides precisely in its fragmentariness. Being "a plank from the wreck of Paradise" ensures it a power of suggestiveness that, completed, it might not have enjoyed. Children of the atomistic age, sceptical before wholeness and finish, many of us, especially Americans, prefer open-ended poems; we think them closer to things as they are.

Coleridge's poem deserves attention for its bearing on the problems that beset the arts, particularly poetry, in the modern world. The headline tells us that the writer had retired, in ill-health, to a lonely farm-house, a likely remote spot, surrounded as it was by irreducible isolation thereby intensified—by two provincial towns. A likely moment also under a drug-induced stupor, the dream of a poem, an ambiguous vision of paradise. Even more likely since just before falling asleep the poet had been reading in "Purcell's Pilgrimage" about the Khan Kubla since the palace was grander than the Khan had been, but by unfurling, just as Coleridge fell to work on the poem, a public inn near by breaking in on Coleridge, detained him "above an hour". When Coleridge returned from the rest of the poem had passed away like the image of a stream into which a stone had been cast.

Supposedly, the "stone" that shattered the dream was, in the person of a Porlockian, daily reality: the reality, always urgent, of Coleridge's incapacity to cope with the world. Its claimant, his, his domestic discord and guilt, as well as his physical or psychosomatic illnesses. Wordsworth, admiration for whom led Coleridge to depreciate his own gifts ("Wordsworth is a very great man, the only man to whom at all times and in all modes of excellence, I feel myself inferior"), not only dealt more competently with the daily problems of life, he had the ability as a poet to turn the immediate, seemingly commonplace world into genuine, highly original poetry. He was not, however, a modern poet; his time taken to heart—this simple speech, informed with the passions, could produce powerful, fresh work, little deluged to the best poetry of the time. How then should Coleridge's gift for remote times and outlandish places seem inconsequential to him? Might we not, therefore, single out as the real man from Porlock in Coleridge's life, marvelous to say, Wordsworth? Certainly, as his later poetry empty of passion, there was a strong, growing stock of the Porlockian in Wordsworth. And though he failed the city, he did not fall to a drab end commonplace.

It is the common speech of men and women that has won the day in England as in America. The man from Porlock, as D. J. Enright's new anthology *The Oxford Book of Contemporary Verse* bears out, has

Poetry from Porlock

By Theodore Weiss

been sworn in as an intrinsic part of poetry. Witman, cleaving through he did to the Emersonian sublime, successfully finding it in the smallest things, set out in enthroning the man from Porlock. Pound and Eliot, while insisting on the highest standards for art and, as internationalists, expressing impatience with the merely local, championed colloquial speech and sped the democratic cause in poetry. The urban world provided a good deal of their subject matter. William Carlos Williams, basking at their devotion to fact and places, to past accomplishments, plumped for the here and now, in his case a drab, modern town like Rutherford, near New York.

Sitting in with the man, he became medical, paver to the Klan flock, possibly not so different from Wordsworth's rustics. Relatedly Williams was convinced that the present man from Porlock or Rutherford, bills, business, daily troubles and all—it was a role he enjoyed assuming himself publicly, could and must be made to sing.

Similarly, Marianne Moore, also sticking fast to the United States, in her poetic definition of "Poetry," urged "the genuine," "the useful," and what we can "understand." No less than the members of the Movement she scorned the phony and the obscure. Moreover, taking issue with Tolstoy, she would open poetry to everything in her world. "...nor is it valid to discriminate against business documents and school-books."... Of course she insisted that these materials must be used by real poets, "literators of imagination" who can produce "imaginary gardens with real treads in them." Her own poems sport quotations from assorted magazines, pamphlets, school-books and other prosaic, too-voiced sources.

Meantime, here as throughout his life another figure has kept his luxuriant, amused distance. If there has ever been a modern who could consider himself the right hand of the man from Porlock, it is surely Pound and Eliot. Stevens felt at odds with his friend Williams in the latter's insistence on "style," on the way a thing is said rather than on the thing itself.

This has its share of irony since Williams usually worked in a plain, stripped language, whereas Stevens enjoyed an ornamental one, he styling a mannerist. Decaying by business, his important role in a large insurance company, and plodding in Hartford much more than Coleridge was by Porlock, Stevens in privacy and weak solitude decayed his own florid muse. Decaying occasional domes he carried on his double life with little sense of conflict or deprivation. On the contrary, he delighted in keeping separate both prospering parts of his astonishingly schizophrenic life.

Now in recent American poetry we witness the bewilderingly rich reifying of the efforts of the poets I have described. Never before has there been such a spate of poetry writing. One could easily list well over a hundred seriously engaged American poets, and then feel guilty about the many omitted. Senior poets like Kunitz, Eberhart, and Warren have produced their own highly distinctive oeuvres. Plath, Duncan, Rich, Ammons, Roethke, Dickey, Levertov, Shapiro, Merwin, Kinnell, Wright, Levine, Hugo and Reznickoff—here, too, are considerable achievements. Most of them, coming on fast, among a horde of other poets, each developing a personal work and world, are Hess, Gallagher, Simic, Dave Smith, Beck, Gluck, Pinsky, Gibbons.

This productivity has inevitably created excesses. Plain poems are being written en masse, frequently with little sense of what Williams meant by form, measure, style. Once again, as he was probably inevitable, common speech, its poets often succumb to, drabness; at times it is a confessional poetry with little to confess beyond commonplace confusion. The man from Porlock at his most Porlockian has finally come into his own, as he has among many of the post-Hardy, post-Georgian, post-Auden British poets. Thus readers have remarked this work's failure to be memorable. Yet given the poets' strong desire to appear natural, casual as passing speech

itself, with no designs on the reader, how could it be otherwise? D. J. Enright, in the introduction to his *Oxford Book of Contemporary Verse*, coyly circumscribes some of these excesses. Referring to Lowrance's poetry of "the instant moment" where "there is no perfection, no consummation, nothing finished," Enright concludes, "Such writing has been praised for being groping and un-articulate, like a just poetry is merely to repeat and condense our weaknesses." I am amused to notice a recent issue of *The Southern Review* in which a critic juxtaposes Yeats's "Leda and the Swan" with Merrill, Van Duvy, Kumin, Howard, Justice, and others. But apparently such poets did not serve Enright's purpose.

It is late in the day to exorcise the problem posed for the soother country by America and its modernism. Donald Davie has called American poetry "imperialist"; they are, by English standards, often loud-mouthed and ill-mannered. We know what vexation, downright nuisance, those foreigners Pound and Eliot, and Yeats as well, proved to be, not only to the English but to the American ship of poetry, but insisting on sailing it off, cannons booming, into dangerous, alien waters. With these finally got rid of, some planks can be salvaged for the foundering ship to make a modest boat, one happily lucked out. Why allow brawling Americans aboard such a vessel, let alone passengers like Donne, Blake, Shelley, Browning, Hopkins, had they been unlucky enough to be born to these times. It is, it seems, the eighteenth century with its wit and its neatness, and its civilities that many English writers yearn for as they try to wake from—or ignore—the nightmare of romanticism.

Given the present shrunken condition of England and its growing indifference to poetry, Enright can say, "In terms of

spectator sport... poetry... has shrunk to around the level of marbles or yo-yo." It is not surprising that many English poets should feel modesty the best policy and look askance at American poets who still think poetry important and, exuberant about it, feel free to kick over the traces, including those of formal verse. Blake's reaction comes to mind. Thoroughly neglected, he became more resolute, more convinced than ever of the meaningfulness of his work. Pushed into a less than marginal position, he proclaimed it central and all the rest peripheral. Enright himself dares to quote Hazlitt on poetry as "the stuff of which our life is made".

But, Enright maintains, "...if poetry is a public matter it is not the place for private revelations, and it is not a public matter it has no place in a published book." Whatever agreement his attitude may elicit, surely it is extremely put. What usually begins privately, if powerfully felt, seen and expressed, becomes public soon enough. Enright might consider against the Namerov statement he quotes: "There is no thought so secret we so unique, so wicked or so shameful or sublime, that the same has not quietly occurred to many others." Many English poets, one can say, are reluctant to recognize the mysteries, the basic imperious mystery of life itself, which grant poetry sooner or later brings us to. As for the public side of poetry, beyond the fact that poetry to be genuine must usually first take place privately between the poet and his medium, in an age increasingly, favourably political or public is not snowed privacy or removal from it the clearings of art, very much in order? No doubt this hunger for privacy and the preservation of the individual indifference to poetry Enright can say, "In terms of

This is not an easy thing to be truly happy, But to be kind is very easy and that is the greatest measure of happiness.

From a letter to his wife

THE LETTERS OF JOHN WILMOT Earl of Rochester

Edited and annotated with an introduction by
Jeremy Treglown

This is the first complete, unexpurgated, edition of Rochester's letters, and provides fascinating insights into the mind and activities of a poet whose importance has never been so clear as it is today. They contain, too, comments, serious as well as scurrilous, on political, social and literary personalities and events of the Restoration.

304 pages 8 plates 20 guineas

BASIL BLACKWELL PUBLISHER, OXFORD

'Nay so confirmed was he in sin, that he lived, and oftentimes almost died, a Martyr for it.'

Robert Parsons, preaching at Rochester's funeral (1680)

arts. In any case, with the triumph of media like television and the newspaper, is a deploring of certain excesses and a calling for more public voice likely to regain audiences?

Audience or not, a number of modern English poets and critics, haunted by the lateness of the time, have an acute, if not rigid, sense. The argument goes something like this: since in Shakespeare's time, the language was still in a fluid state, it was very well for him to exert his immense power to carry on his experimentation. The language was there to be shaped. But the eighteenth century, discovering language's and poetry's laws, their true character, established them and their norms. The nineteenth century, often trying to escape this legacy, was misled. A Hopkins, dealing with the recovery of the fervor and linguistic excitement of a Shakespeare, therefore encouraging chaos, was wastefully remiss. And increasingly, these poets who would break out of the cage of the late, apparently, for Romanticism, were, rather than regarding American poets as naive outlaws, English writers would do better to realize that, though the fathers of America were eighteenth century rationalists, the country itself began with Romanticism. It was since it was new, with energies and a sense of pioneering freshness suggestive of the Elizabethan age. For unlike tightly knitted, comparatively small England, long-end well-entrenched customs and practices, vastly sprawling America is, at its best, open and pluralistic.

But Enright's volume not only defends a temporary English poetry and the anti-modernist aims of the Movement against charges such as provincialism, timidity, blindness, it is also polemical through its exclamations. The formula "I am not a poet" is "the poetry of civility, passion and order." One can appreciate this, but find it remote from the actualities of our time. And often, the volume, poor little person can be seen covering in the middle, brown, Kerouac and Blake Marlowe's study of the Movement, remarks of Mercurio's involvement in "loss and division." He goes on, "I've group was a poetry, and a fiction, aware of what it had done and as it was as it was. The worst work was in which the need to seem philistine

has made this poet so philistine." These writers would appear to share or at least to be deeply affected by their world's most strident American public voice likely to regain audiences?

Here is the principal rub and the problem of editing generally. I think of three remarkable volumes: Yeats's *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892-1933*, Lowell's *Imitations*, and Leavis's *The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse*. The first two are fascinating introductions of great, extravagant gifts. The Yeats by any decent standard is something of a fiasco, but at least it was a fiasco, too, fraught in comments as it is, with the sort of high- and low-jinks only Yeats could serve up. Lowell's volume claimed to be freely translated from Homer on. Actually it was a translation through Lowell's mind of a poet who had a sense of sensibility, a highly personal taste, course in all poetry. Larkin lost through off an extraordinary feat. Though he did represent major poets like Yeats and Eliot, he managed by way of the twentieth century to point a poet's work, that is, by way of poets and poems akin to his kind of work. One must be awed by his anthology's prevailing air of triumphant since proper subduer. How many readers would suspect that the century has been one of the richest, most exciting, most innovative that English poetry has known?

Perhaps this is the inevitable price we pay for editors who are also excellent, committed poets. By the weight, the conviction, and the limitations of their gifts they tend to look for the company of kindred spirits, seek themselves out in the poets around them. Obviously poets of the order of Larkin and Enright should chiefly respond to their own world and the work that seems most comparable with it, especially when that world and work are under attack. But surely, most of us would suspect that the wistful for these writers, and therefore for their country as well, not to encourage and benefit from the liveliest, most products of English at large. Furthermore, what does it mean to poetry when bad badness, skepticism and common sense, generating an inhibiting suspicion of elevation, to mention the risibility, the intuitive, even, the Mallarméan "something else"—dismisses it as mere inflation? Shall the non from Porlock take over all poetry?

The windowless belly

By Wendy Cope

VASKO POPE
The Golden Apple
33pp. Anvil, £2.25
85646 057 5

Who rails at the stars
Has his teeth full out.

There are several such solemn warnings in this round of stories, songs, riddles and proverbs from the Serbo-Croatian folk tradition. Anyone who has seen the recent *New Statesman* competitions for wise-sounding but pointless proverbs will find it difficult to remain straight-faced at some of the belly-bag proverbs of the genre. "When did fog ever upset a tree trunk?" might well have been a prize-winning entry. To others, one responds with a nod rather than a smile. "When a thunderer gets man afraid of himself, for instance, as 'A too cunning man jumps over his back'."

There is plenty of cunning in the stories. In one of them a Turkish sultan identifies true idlers by setting fire to the mat they are sitting on and seeing whether they can be bothered to move—an idea that might find its way into the hard-boiled in the Cabinet. Another, his devil's apprentice outsmarts him and eats him up while he is in the shape of a sparrow. Quite a few characters are eaten, or narrowly escape being eaten. The publishers hope that the book will appeal to children as well as adults, and there is certainly enough of the macabre to satisfy even the most bloodthirsty child. Some of the stories are enjoyable, others seem curiously to conform

until one reads the preface, where it is explained that Pope abbreviated most of them "to keep his name poetic." Few children will thank him for that.

The riddles, of course, are the unguessable, pecked kind and will disappoint the sort of person who likes to go round asking how many phrases you can get in a minute. Printed underneath their answers, they look like them, but are not. Inhabitants of a poet's notebook, clever lines in search of a poem.

The translators, Andrew Hervey and Anne Pennington, found that the most difficult part of their task was to make the lyrics songs into "vivid and immediate English poems" and they have, in several cases, succeeded. Some of the sadder ones, like "The Drowned Girl" and "The Shepherd," are moving, and there is an "amazing fable," "How Raki Came," which tells how, after God chased the first man from paradise, Man would have gone mad if it wasn't for the Devil. He built a building on four beams. Left alone on all sides. Turned water into raki then and sold it.

Vasko Pope's own poems owe a great deal to his involvement with folk poetry. In the foreword, he says that the Golden Apple was the work of English admirers of his work. They will find, for example, that his marvellously energetic sequence "Give Me Back My Raga" is clearly related to much older verses like "God make you black as a pot, thin as a thread—may you rise through the stem of a pipe and sit cross-legged in its bowl." The ontology, for all its laughable moments, provides a valuable insight into Pope's world of game and magic, metamorphoses, and fairy-tale horrors, where poppies, bones and disembodied heads can have an eventful life of their own.

Beasts of circumstance

By Jay Parini

RICHARD ECHHART
Ways of Light
65pp. Oxford University Press.
\$11.95.
0 19 502737 X

At seventy-six Richard Echhart stands apart, as ever, belonging to no school of poetry, being his own man without apology. An irrepressible voice in American poetry for more than two decades, in *Ways of Light* he remains ebullient, quirky, brilliant and unswerving. Not counting his large Collected Poems of 1975, this is his first book of poems since 1973. For the reader, Echhart's familiarity with his work will find Echhart reawakening his own themes: the fragility of existence, the finally of death, mutability in its various aspects and guises. These are subjects which found their close expression in his early work: "The Groundhog," "The Fury of Aerial Bombardment," "For a Lamb," and "Cancer Cells" come to mind, all widely anthologized. What is new in this book, or freshly seen, is the central but lurid tale of a man's love; Echhart asks with new urgency for gentleness to come, the "arms" caresses better than arms that fight. With a rapturous vigour reminiscent of Walt Whitman, Echhart rejoices in his love, not only of humankind, but of the world as well. The wilderness of the heart, the order of the garden, and the apples, O the real apples of the orchard, lie with us with poignancy, and with the peculiar angle of vision characteristic of his work.

Echhart is perhaps the last genuinely Romantic poet not to suffer unduly from what Harold Blau calls "belatedness." He is unabashedly naïf, believing in "the spiritual" as innocently as any poet ever has. His voice contains little of the ironic distance so common in American poetry to the past decades. This allows him to confront his subjects with an openly affecting naïveté; surely another thing that would irritate:

When darkness came and grew
I listened while earth lay still.
I listened, I thought I knew
The vibrance under the still,
If I were now just dead
I could not make less sound.

I slowly bent my head
Intuitively to the ground.
I listened again. My feet
Took root within the soil;
Earth grew within me, sweet
In my limbs. I knew the soil
Had claimed my body whole.

The poet claims to have recovered that primal unity between man and nature which, in the great Romantic myth, existed before what Blake calls man's "fall into generation." By believing the myth himself, Echhart makes us believe as well, at least for the duration of the poem. He achieves this by a rapturous simplicity of diction and rhythm, by the old-fashioned lyricism of lines such as "When darkness came and grew/The hushed wide earth lay still," this in spite of such very dead lines as "If I were now just dead/I could not make less sound." As with many good poets, one furges the intellectual, one furges almost come to miss them were they not there; in Echhart's case, one would miss the unevenness, which reinforces the aura of spontaneity and childlike discovery.

The Romantic lyric, however modified, demands of its practitioners a certain concreteness. When the poet's eye strays too far from the image, the object under view, the poem will tend to blur. Echhart knows this, but he has always had a hankering after abstractions.

The results can be unfortunate, as in the opening of "Angels and Man," for instance, where he says, "What stirs imagination is the impossibility of lunacy within complexity." He begins "Interior Winter Sequence" with a line that states that "All the drab things have more valuable." Perceptive as these poems are, they are too often too abstract. Most poets, including Echhart, cannot. The most successful poems in *Ways of Light* are those that grasp the world, allowing the ear's imagination to illumine what it holds, as in "Wet June":

Yellow doilies, pressed down by
the rain,
Approaching, alighting, in brief
moments touching grass.
It seems unusual. Will they am
Incline them up,
Tomorrow? They lie down in
complete silence.

Likewise I am pressed down by
time towards the end
Of life. I might as well be
dead in the ground.
My silence is as deep as that of the
flowers.

Echhart amends this springing, plebeian note throughout the volume. The mood of a New England autumn with its traditional associations of brilliance in decline, predominates in this Season of hills and yellow mist. The poem goes down to the heart in Echhart's phrase, "Redolent of past dreams," containing recollections of William Carlos Williams at work on *Paterson*, of Edith and Robert Lowell in a Boston restaurant, both "sharp and lonely," in a time when "some death had not taken over the world." There are also two elegiac poems for Echhart's famous pupil, Robert Lowell, who died ignominiously in a route from one love to another. However much Echhart may resent the inevitable loss which occurs, he finds a mild consolation in their acknowledgment, as in "Autumn," where in spite of everything, "The brute heat of circumstance blazes on."

It would be wrong to suggest that *Ways of Light* is a glassy book because of Echhart's fascination with mutability and decline. The second elegy for Lowell, "Some Words for Robert Lowell," reads with distance in the face of death, personified as Galahad, in a central poem, "Survivor," the poet celebrates the ancient ladies of the Maine coast who, in their monies, ran still "Distant from Boston in Maine," and who are "clown in mind and body" shaped by "a harsh, very much alive" Florida spring, he says: "It is the continuous welling up from the earth we must remember." Like wise, in "A Town Call" he best respectfully to the eerie cry of the heart across the miles, "North Atlantic City," "Prize is the city I cannot understand," he says, accepting and celebrating the mystery itself.

To praise what remains mysterious, to light back at death, as to acknowledge decay with a realist's eye, but in final bitterness to couch with an emotional secret, has come to Echhart. Echhart has come upon his own, and his own originality, his own mystery, his own life.

Mango's book is in three sections. The first, on Aspects of Byzantine Life, discusses peoples and languages, society and economy (the latter topic most briefly), the decline and revival of cities, dissenting groups in society, monks, and teachers. The second section, on the Conceptual World of Byzantium, is concerned with popular ideas on the universe and its inhabitants, the Byzantines' view of their past and their future, and their ideal of the good life. The third, entitled "The Legacy," surveys the main features of Byzantine literature and art.

As Mango himself discerningly recognizes, this is a highly eclectic approach. Many topics are left out of account or merely mentioned in passing—military matters, foreign relations, trade, finance, philosophy and theological speculation, law, science and medicine, to name only a few. Some of the problems are the scarcity or obscurity of the evidence. But in the main what has shaped the book is the author's own judgment of what is important and what is not. The reader is never overwhelmed by a mass of unselected, indigestible information. Mango is always firmly in control of his own erudition, rigorous, sceptical, and detached.

One may occasionally take a tittle-brown at what he seems to be important. The long excursus on the calendar in Chapter 10 is a case in point. And while his account of popular astrology in Chapter 11 is fascinating, the discerning reader may wonder whether the detailed arrangements for the Second Coming were really in the forefront of the mind of many Byzantines. Incidentally, the completion of the sixth millennium of the Byzantine era, when many expected the end of the world to occur, was in 492, not 508. The end of the seventh millennium in 1492, after Constantinople had fallen to the Turks, provided a different set of expectations. In fact the New World was discovered in that year.

Mango has much that is new and sometimes challenging to say on popular religion and cosmology, on the nature and development of Byzantine feudalism and its often unnoticed Doppelgänger, the nascent Byzantine bourgeoisie, on the essence of Byzantine art—a particularly successful chapter—on Byzantine literature, and on many

The orderly Byzantine mind

By Robert Browning

CYRIL MANGO:
Byzantium
The Empire of New Rome
336pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£17.50.
0 297 77747 5

For Voltaire's Byzantine history was "a worthless collection of orations and miracles"; Gibbon saw in it "the triumph of barbarism and religion"; and Montesquieu "a tragic epilogue to the glory of Rome." Today we lack the arrogant self-assurance of the Age of Enlightenment and can look at the Byzantines with a measure of sympathy and understanding, even if respect. The general reader is well provided with introductions to Byzantine society and civilization by scholars of distinction. Apart from Norman Baynes's *Byzantine Empire and Successors*, the most accessible is Cyril Mango's *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome*. Civilization, now both somewhat dated, has in English books by John Huxley, H. W. Hausig and Dimitri Obolensky as well as Runciman's recent *Byzantine Theocracy*, in French, distinguished books by André Guillou, H. G. H. Ahrweiler and Alain Ducellier, and if he reads Russian, Alexander Kazhdan's remarkable *Vizantiyskaya Kul'tura*. Byzantinists, it seems, are compulsive and effective popularizers.

Cyril Mango, who has over the years written on a variety of specialist topics from the history of the Church to the technicalities of Byzantine architecture, from the Hermitage of St Neophytus in Cyprus to the relationship between literature and society in Constantinople, now offers a new survey of Byzantine civilization. Like the other works mentioned, this is not a new venture, for he has written a number of books on the subject, and still turn to the austere George Ostrogorsky or the more discursive A. A. Vasiliev.

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other topics. Yet the immediate impression that emerges from the book is a curiously negative one, of a society irreparably divided between shrewd, ignorant and superstitious peasants and squalid, maudlin, playing literary games in a language which none but they could understand, a society preoccupied with the end of the world, a society in which little or nothing actually happened. Careful reading modifies first impressions, but a sense of vanity and emptiness remains.

Yet the Queen of Cities, whose fame spread from Iceland to Kurdistan, the "golden bridge between east and west," as Marx called it, was not lost on a byway of history. It played a leading role and often the dominant role in the affairs of Europe and the Near East for a millennium, as Norman Baynes remarks, an empire, to endure a death-blow and a thousand years, must possess considerable powers of recuperation. The lack of a narrative framework makes Mango's picture of Byzantium too static. The changing responses to successive challenges are indeed abysmal, and the catastrophic break represented by the Arab conquest in the seventh century is emphasized. But in many chapters of the book the thousand years of the Byzantine empire are treated as homogeneous blocks. In the end, the Byzantines are much the same as the Romans, a conception of the world and of their own place in it was constantly

changing. For instance, the Latin West was seen successively as a pagan empire, as a kind of pagan empire, as an arrogant and aggressive usurper, as a hated and despised tyrant, and finally—by sums Byzantines—as an ally and a possible saviour.

Mango is inclined to use evidence from one period for inferences from another. When he describes the Byzantine ideal of the good life he offers a mosaic of citations from the fourth-century Fathers, and particularly from the eminently quotable John Chrysostom. Does this really tell us much about how men saw the good life in the twelfth century, or the fourteenth? Mango clearly believes that it does. He rightly emphasizes the importance of asceticism, "order," in Byzantine thought and practice, with its implication that all change is bad. But there was another principle, no less important, that of *oikonomia*, the recognition of the gap between the ideal and the real, and the readiness to adapt to circumstances. Prescription of how people ought to behave is not good evidence for how they do behave, in Constantinople or in London.

There is, of course, a dearth of evidence on how people actually lived. But Mango makes things more difficult by discarding in advance much of the evidence that he has. "Our world" and "the outside world" are the great bulk of

resourceful combination of heterogeneous and often scrappy source material—existing street systems and plans of bridges, legal documents, maps and sections of buildings, later maps and vedute—as a tour de force. The many line-drawings and illustrations, including "new maps drawn to the author's specifications," have been aptly chosen and, for the most part, well reproduced. Finally, more than forty pages of end-notes provide a mine of information both for specialists and for those who wish to know more about the subject, including social and economic history.

The double-edged power of the past, to inspire but also to obstruct artistic creativity, is one of the author's major themes. At times the interplay of these forces profoundly affected the medieval sense of the city. Under Constantine, the city was represented by scattered, unpretentious community houses and by the trophy of St Peter on the Vatican hill—had as yet made no visible impact on Rome; visitors affected the medieval sense of the city. Under Constantine, the city was represented by scattered, unpretentious community houses and by the trophy of St Peter on the Vatican hill—had as yet made no visible impact on Rome; visitors affected the medieval sense of the city. Under Constantine, the city was represented by scattered, unpretentious community houses and by the trophy of St Peter on the Vatican hill—had as yet made no visible impact on Rome; visitors affected the medieval sense of the city.

But the weight of the past obscured Constantine's reserved his boldness and ventures in church building, the Lateran cathedral and the basilica of St Peter's, the periphery of the city where his own property—outside the permanent city—was the legal boundary and the preserve of the Roman aristocracy. When the reader reaches the twelfth century, the city was the high and continuous rampart established at St Paul's in the fourth century, combined with the medieval city, the city of the west towards and across the Tiber. In contrast, at the Lateran, the efforts of first-century planners to reach out to the city proved a failure, as is shown by the twelfth-century construction of a defence perimeter around both palace and cathedral, the Lateran by then had effectively cut itself off from the heart of Rome.

Roma's tendency was to remain stubbornly conservative, her patrons and artists unresponsive to new concepts evolving elsewhere in Europe. Of special interest, then, are the exceptional moments when political constellations forced her to confront such alien concepts and a powerful, fresh and distinctly Roman art emerged. In the twelfth century, the conservative grip of pontiffs from Hadrian I to Leo

Byzantine literature," he writes, "really has been strained and stretched to its limits. They formed a single phalanx, within which a gamut of choice was open. For a character like Skylitzes the stories of Greek mythology were as real as those of the Old Testament Patriarchs. When the emperor Alexios Comnenus was accused of selling church plate to pay the army, he cited in his defence the example of David and Pericles. A twelfth-century clergyman and man of letters quoted Solomon and Marcus Aurelius as models of literary brevity. To the common man Alexander and Achilles were as much folk-heroes as were the Christian saints; hence the Christianized Alexander—who lives on today as *Iugoslav Alexandros*—and the picture of Achilles as a prophet in a church in the Thessalonian region." Mango has written a book full of sharp insights and striking illustrations. Some of his chapters on popular beliefs are admirable examples of *histoire de mentalités*. Yet the picture he gives is one-sided, both for the reasons set out above and because he has chosen to say virtually nothing about the period from 1204 to 1453. Let us hope that he will go on to write another book as elegant as this one on other aspects of Byzantine society. Few will disagree that Byzantines knew what they had two jaws. "Our world" and "the outside world" were not alternatives between which

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style. Collectively, however, these artists represented something revolutionary in the Roman milieu because they were able to use the past as a key to open up reality, rather than as a substitute for it: "antiquity became, under their hands, a vehicle for conquering the visual world."

The book has two sections: the first eight chapters, entitled "Images and Reality," and a further six, "The City and the Church." The medieval city. The advantage of this structure is that we meet individual monuments and the ideological factors which generated them before considering their position in the overall city plan. But the arrangement also makes for a certain amount of repetition, since a good deal of the evidence is pertinent to both sections, and the role of the first part sometimes seems forced. Yet, as the author himself repeatedly insists and convincingly demonstrates, the heritage of Rome's pagan and Christian past had an important bearing upon the way the city grew.

Kronheimer's discussion of the Capitoline Hill is a case in point. Until the High Middle Ages, the hill remained at the edge of the urban area, outside the medieval street system, poised between the classical past (when its chief buildings were orientated eastwards towards the forum) and its Renaissance future (when Michelangelo united the Augustan to the triumphal arch of the Renaissance and monumentalized the western approach from town). These observations, culled from the second part of the book, need to be taken together with the earlier discussion of the construction of Palazzo del Senato and the murals which inspired it, the decline of papal power and of local family factions by the mid-thirteenth century, and the corresponding strengthening of the sovereignty of the commune, all symbolized by Brancaccio's appointment as solitary senator. It is inconvenient not to have the evidence for the palace as a reflection of the resurgence of Rome's civic pride joined more closely to the discussion of the Capitoline urbanism and topography.

All of which is perhaps only to say that this portrait of medieval Rome needs to be read in its entirety, and that its two sections are mutually reinforcing. One can usually "search" for, and almost never find, a book of this kind: a comprehensive, personal and quickly synopsed history of a vast scholarly field by its most eminent specialist.

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BODLEY HEAD

commentary

Anna 1 and 2

By Francis Wyndham

Gurba
National Film Theatre

Greta Garbo was seventy-five on September 18: in celebration, the National Film Theatre has been showing throughout this month twenty-four of her films (all, that is, but the best, in a second bill of fascinating discoveries, perhaps the most curious was *Love*, an adaptation of Anna Karenina in contemporary film, 1927) dress which, unlike Garbo's talking version eight years later, was rather grandly scripted by Clemence Dane, Salka Viertel and S. N. Behrman; this silent scenario is the work of Frances Marion. The credit should be emphasized, as it is often easy to assume that Garbo, somehow or other, has written her own films; and it remains a possibility that the actress, rather than Miss Marion, is responsible for the particular interpretation given here to the bare bones of Tolstoy's plot.

Anne, married to a repellent tyrant who refuses to sleep with her, has directed all her powerful erotic feeling on to her son Serezhka. The scenes between Gurba (aged twenty-two) and Philippe de fary (who looks about twelve) are remarkably unblinded in their physical expression; even more so than those between Gurba and Julia Gillbert, who plays Vronsky. (This is surprising as the two adult stars, supposed to be lovers off-screen, had just created a sensation with their passionate playacting in *Phosphor and the Devil*, and the role of their second vehicle was alleged to justify the billing "Garbo and Gilbert in love"). In our scene, Anna and Vronsky are interrupted by Serezhka's appearance behind a closed French window: mother and son kiss yearningly through symbolic glass. In another, while she watches her son take a bath, Anna seems unable to keep her hands off his naked body. When Anna runs away with Vronsky, it is his jealousy of her incestuous attachment to Serezhka that poisons their relationship: little is made of his longing to be back with his regiment, and nothing of her possessiveness. In Francis Marion's finest effect, in which Serezhka acts with unerring abandon, shows the lovers duelling by an Italian street when a concubine of Serezhka's seduces Anna. Anna grabs hold of one little boy and starts to paw him; clearly taking her for a child-molester, he bursts into tears and runs away. Shuffled into a cab, Vronsky agrees to let her see her son again.

The film was made with two alternative endings: a sad one to be shown in Europe and New York, and a happy one for the reassurance of less sophisticated audiences in the rest of America. The first can roughly be said to follow Tolstoy, though with considerable distortions, having decided to sacrifice himself to Vronsky's happiness. Anna persuades him to attend a regimental dinner, where he and his commanding officer, who is drunk "to love", she is next glimpsed on the railway platform, and her suicide follows with such startling swiftness that an effect of anticlimax is produced. The latter's famous (and mutually cinematic) sequence of her drive to the station is omitted. During this, Anna's stream-of-consciousness monologue contains the following reflections: "Well, supposing I picture to myself what I want in order to be happy? Well, I get divorced and Alexey Alexandrovich gives me Serezhka, and I marry Vronsky! ... What then?"

This reflection seems to have existed the second ending, in which Anna simply vanishes after the ironic toast "to love". Three years later, no monument with his regiment, Vronsky comes across an item in a newspaper: Serezhka Kurvin, a pupil at the St Petersburg Academy has won a prize for horsemanship. Vronsky obviously leaves of absence, hustles to the school and asks to see the boy—who does not recognize him. Filled with unreciprocated embraces, with an effusiveness only slightly less restrained than Garbo's. "Do you have news of your mother? No, says the child, she has visited me every day since Father died." At that moment, the headmaster enters in Anna—who, typically, does not notice Vronsky, but falls upon her son. When she has at last been disengaged from the latter's embraces, Gurba rewards Gilbert with a kiss—and the film fades out at a classic clutch as narrative as the truth in the alternative ending. This happy ending, nonetheless, is the more intriguing of the two: since the original has shadowy hints left so far behind, it is welcome. (It is curious that every time within it the clue to a possible happy solution.) One leaves the theatre pondering over the question posed by Tolstoy's Anna: "What makes a man? What makes a woman?" Anna has resolved the husband-versus-son dilemma—but not yet that of lover versus son.

Constructions of character

By Richard Combs

My American Uncle
Academy Two Cinema

My American Uncle is a puzzle. Of any other Resnais film this would be an uncomplicated, obvious statement. His characters and plots—whether the subject-matter is emotional or architectural as in *Last Year at Marienbad*—seem to fit together in some aesthetic relationship. The bright, almost polished surfaces of his films are usually crowded with activity, but one has to follow the editing pattern rather than the action in order to understand what is going on. His is a supremely constructed cinema, where significance and nuance lie in the cut from one shot to the next and not in the subtleties of the performances. Similarly, read across, on the surface, like looking for faces hidden in the pattern.

This new film contains a quite satisfying puzzle of this kind. It begins and ends with a collage of kind of multiple picture postcard scenes from the lives of three small characters. In between, their

education and growth are briefly sketched in, the waxing and waning of their amoral histories, the rise and fall of their careers (even Jonny parallels with the activities of their respective movie idols), all according to a pattern which an accompanying commentary links to a theory of the biological basis of behaviour. The sting in the tail of the theory—its deterministic and coincidental point—is that what we think of as individual personality is simply a grab-bag of value judgments which are all the result of our social programming, and that as we get older these tenets of "personality" become more rigid, less susceptible to argument.

Take away one such brick, the commentator announces as we last freeze reconstruction of the characters we have got to over the past two hours—and the whole edifice will collapse. What Resnais has given us, in effect, is a scientific theory of personality that is akin to the old building characters: an artificial process. Nothing is organic, essential or individual; everything is association. In the words of Professor Henri Laborit, the film's co-author, "We are the others".

Uncle is a well-modulated, elegant, rather witty structure. What it does not suggest is that the mystery surrounding the hero of Resnais's *Stavisky*, or the multiple doctos of *Providence* is that the pattern encloses something that is not part of the pattern, that Resnais's scientific fiction is likely to discover anything that is not already part of its scientific method. The flatness of effect that has always marked the insistence that the inner meaning of his films lies on their surface, here looks like the result of the crippling necessity of following three stories to loose synchronisation.

René Ruyssenaere (Gérard Depardieu) is the son of a struggling farmer who breaks with his father to become the technical director of a textile factory. Jean Le Gall (Roger Pierre), this son of an upper-middle-class family in Brittany, deserts to pursue literary and political ambitions in Paris; and Joanne Gernier (Nicole Garcia) nurtures her working-class Communist stage. Having made his career in political journalism, he has a few problems in competition with other problems which lead to various frustrations, illness, breakdown and attempted suicide. So far so good in the demonstration of Laborit's behavioural theory. The difficulty for

the film and its accompanying public in co-opting Laborit's deterministic mechanistic system for its structure, is how to prevent itself from coming to similar conclusions.

To begin with, as the film's direct authority, Laborit is introduced to a quietly disquieting way, wandering through his book looking paternally over the shoulder of a young female assistant as if he were the host of a Look magazine programme on the behavioural sciences. Resnais has himself declared that Laborit is not the sum of the film: "The fiction does not distort the biological thesis, and the thesis doesn't necessarily comment on the action. Sometimes the two lines cross, but just as often they are parallel or even move away from one another. Despite his comments on the 'associative cortex', which is the seat of the random play of creativity and imagination, the mystery element within Resnais's construction may have to do precisely with the imaginative life of his characters: they all have secret ambitions which remain unfulfilled and the role-playing suggested by the movie clips. But the complex than it might appear. It is a film about the future, less than Resnais's best work, it is because the use of the film is not Laborit's, but its very nature, is taken on trust.



This cartoon by Major of Gurba is taken from Alexander Volkov's richly illustrated Gurba (1980, Wendenfeld and Nicolson, £10.95) 77794 81.

Learning not to spit

By Patrick O'Connor

Elizabeth Schwarzkopf
Wigmore Hall

Elizabeth Schwarzkopf gave her farewell London recital at the Wigmore Hall exactly two years ago, so it is appropriate that she should have returned recently to the same platform in her new role of teacher to give a series of master classes with prominent young professional singers.

As her students sing the whistlers' encouragement, conducts a bit, hums and whistles; and she is a couple of phrases to let them know what she is up to. Not surprisingly, the lightest discussions and most illuminating comments come during performances of music by Mozart.

Schubert and Wolf-composers Schwarzkopf is particularly related with. But expertise here made her stiff. Of a rare Schubert she says "This is a musical work, you know I don't do this all the time, but I do it here. It is amusing to hear a single word, but her dedication to the text is time out to give a little discourse on the potential richness of the German language and the danger of 'spitting out words' all over the drawing room."

The poetist at the Wigmore Hall was Katharine Sturrock, singing Schubert's "The Wanderer". She made her stiff. Of a rare Schubert she says "This is a musical work, you know I don't do this all the time, but I do it here. It is amusing to hear a single word, but her dedication to the text is time out to give a little discourse on the potential richness of the German language and the danger of 'spitting out words' all over the drawing room."

Dramas of desire

By Frances Spalding

Stanley Spencer
Royal Academy

Stanley Spencer's distrust of foregrounds plunges one immediately into the midst of his dramas. At the Royal Academy one is hurled into the crowd accompanying Christ through Canaan streets, into the tumult of resurrections and regiments, down disappearing roads and across rows of suburban gardens. Precipitated one moment into domestic scenes, the next into ones of harsh industrial labour, the visitor to this infuriating and enormous retrospective emerges having shared in Spencer's varied engagement with life. For he observed everything with the same unwavering state that he found in his late self-portrait. After the rush-hour frenzy of his last-figure compositions, this full-scale portrait is still, direct and demanding.

Spencer is acclaimed as a great English eccentric; yet no artist offends more seriously against our native tastes. Instead of intimacy and restraint, he portrays vivid emotions in an extrovert manner: for an audience that dislikes sexual frankness in the visual arts, he produced nudities that shock with their stretched skin and minute detail. Between the wars, while each painting flourished, Spencer conceived of nude and vast projects to be housed in public buildings. While many artists tinkered with landscapes and domestic still-lives, Spencer painted communities and major biblical subjects. Like G. F. Watts, his small stature did not prevent him from dreaming on heroic scale. He continues a narrative tradition that stems from Italy in scenes that are unmistakably English.

The exhibition begins with Spencer at the Slade School, imitating Pre-Raphaelite illustra-

tions in drawings that strain with the gallery devoted to the Burglar-Chapel alterations, some of which have been removed from their location for this exhibition, and those paintings which immediately follow.

At Burghclere Spencer transferred his religious sense from Cankham to the mental tasks he had undertaken in the First World War, first as a hospital orderly, then as a training camp and finally at the Front in Macedonia. Inspired by St. Augustine's *Confessions*, he learned to perceive the spiritual in everyday acts such as bed-making and the buttering of bread. He records these scenes, enlarging observed fact through expressive distortion. But in the gallery which follows, the routine is exchanged for the bizarre. A man and his wife make love to sunflowers. Elsewhere, five young women fall into an ecstasy of sexual longing at the sight of old men, huddled nervously into a protective group. Further on one can compare the famous "Resurrection, Cookham" (1924-26) with the same subject produced in Port Glasgow in 1947-50. Though similar ideas appear in each, such as the dusting down of resurrected husbands by their wives, in the later composition the distortion is exaggerated and over-emphatic, the effect of pattern making the composition crowded and airless, the colours reduced to an even greyness of tone.

Just as we begin to tire of the Bank Holiday mood, of Spencer's ceaseless pursuit of "happiness and love" ("If that is Resurrection," expounded Churchill, "then give me eternal sleep"), our attention is retrieved by the stretch of Spencer's sympathy as it takes in the unexpected, and illogical: the carpenter ascending the straightness of his saw, the soldier plunging his head into a basin of water, the ship-builder splintering a steel hammer or dropping red-hot rivets into position. "People cannot see the wonder in the hardest reality," Spencer de-

There are no problems in directing our sympathies. In the first net it is established that every character except one (the one who will be killed), is civilized, witty, charming and convivial, the obstacle to perfect domestic happiness being the war in Europe. The one without making everyone insipid and dull, the comic seriousness of the Müller children is not sentimental.

Fanny is played by Peggy Ashcroft, with visible enjoyment and eagerness, even though the character is something of a comedy stereotype. A woman who has to be at the centre of everything, she is witty and cultured, devoted to her dead husband, harsh to her son, shrill with the servants and determined to cause everybody a great deal of trouble when she decides to die. David (John Quayle) engages in spirited repartee with his mother, sarcastic but essentially well-meaning. Even the German family, whose experiences might excise a few signs of strain, are good-natured. Susan Engel and David Burke, as Sara and Kurt, give quiet, strong performances; Sara is tough, loyal and effectual, Kurt kind, civilized and tolerant, and their children, devoted to them, are intelligent and responsible. Are these your children? exclaims Fanny, "or are they dressed-up midgits?" The necessary fly in the ointment is a Romaian count also staying in the house, with his American wife Martha (Dorothy Grice) who, in love with David, Count de Brancovici (Sandro Elia) is a different sort of ex-lover from Europe: a self-seeker and cad, he is plainly asking for somebody to bump him off.

Though the count provides the immediate source of the drama by threatening to reveal Kurt's presence to the authorities, more important is the conflict between the two worlds, Europe and America, which the characters represent. (Lillian Hellman had been reading *The Europeans*.) Their efforts to understand and reconcile them-

"Grandma has not seen much of the world!" are what we are told, and we are firmly associated with the Americans. Initially, it is the Germans who are disadvantaged by being out of context, and their incoherence is concealed, perhaps, as comedy. But their incomprehension becomes more serious, at the climax, fundamental differences break through and destroy the Germans' efforts to conform with their surroundings. What makes the on-stage murder so important, as dramatic moment is that it reverses the positions. Kurt, European context asserts itself,

making Fanny and David (and the audience) fascists.

This production not only feels right, it looks right. Eileen Dign's set and the costumes by Jessica Wynne are excellent—for example, on the first entrance of the Müller family, contrasting the grand opulence of the colonial-style interior with the thick clothes and heavy shoes of the refugees. It also sounds right, with all but the German accents dependable. The whole production works towards the success of one moment which, melodramatic though it is, is one of the best in Lillian Hellman's drama.

Crucial to Samuel Beckett's writing life—apart from the reality of time itself, the most pressing there is—has been the discovery of the voice, the freeing of that voice and its burden of private anguish; which has much more to do with the weight of his words and their hold over us than obvious such as solipsism or "inequality" of language.

There is something perversely inevitable about this dramatic reading of his latest non-dramatic work, Company, giving an embodiment on stage of a voice which "comes to one in the dark". John Russell Brown, who directed what is nevertheless a sensitive and persuasive performance which returns to the Cottesloe in the New Year.

Stephen Moore, as the voice speaking in the dark, is the voice of one with you in the dark, his defiance of endless grammatical permutation, and intensely patient

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Fodder for the farms

By Gillian Wagner

JOY PARR:

Labouring Children
British Immigrant Apprentices to
Canada 1869-1924
181pp. Croom Helm. £11.95.
0 85644 398 1

PHYLIS HARRISON (Editor):

The Home Children
271pp. Watson and Dwyer. Winnipeg, Canada. \$14.95.
0 920486 02 9

The titles of these two books, *Labouring Children* and *The Home Children*, succinctly describe the origins of the children and their journey. Both are written by the more than 100,000 child migrants who left Britain accompanied by friends or relatives to work on Canadian farms between the years 1869-1930. The children came from the overcrowded towns of Britain, and many, and many, gathered up by the more charitable children's homes that came into being in the second half of the nineteenth century. Most were under fourteen, some as young as three or four; they were sent across the Atlantic to be boarded out until they could be apprenticed as agricultural labourers or domestic servants in rural Canada.

Whether the reasons put forward in support of the emigration of juveniles were religious and philanthropic, in the which case emigration would remove the children once and for all from the evils of city life, or the more genuine aspirations of empire builders, the underlying cause was economic. Canadian farmers needed cheap labour and Britain had not yet come to terms with one of the results of her industrial revolution: the chronic problem of child desertion in her great cities.

In reply to the unasked question, Maria Rye, who took the first party of children across the Atlantic in 1869 wrote in *The Times*:

"When treatment will they receive the cold, the starvation, the temptation, what will they receive from our hands? Will they receive the good, the hospital, the Magdalen receive them? Can anything I introduce them to in Canada and America be worse than that in which they are doomed to leave them where they are now?"

William Taylor, Director of the National Museum of Man in Ottawa and himself the son of a "Home Children" that the epic of these children has been almost totally ignored until now. He writes that some will find their personal stories collected together in the book "almost incredible", showing "defenceless children who were despised and exploited in Canada's mean colonial world, where anti-English prejudice flourished".

Joy Parr's excellent and admirably concise, *Labouring Children*, is the first serious attempt to study the history of the juvenile emigration movement, to assess the motives of those who placed in Canadian society and consider the reasons that brought the movement to an end. The book is based on numerous original sources and contains a wealth of new material. As Joy Parr says, the work seemed out of step with its time; it is strange to find a policy flourishing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century which took children, only a third of whom were orphans and most still too young to leave school for full employment in the United Kingdom, and place them on farms in Canada where their educational opportunities were limited and the work heavy. More especially so as the philanthropists engaged in the work saw themselves as following in the steps of Lord Shaftesbury, whose own scheme, put forward in 1849 to Parliament, for sending his Ragged School children to Australia, expressly stated that the children should be over fourteen years of age.

Professor Parr illustrates the ambivalent attitude of the overall emigration movement, who, while acknowledging the importance of family

life and the sanctity of the home, ruthlessly parted children from their parents and kin when they considered separation to be in the child's best interests. Philanthropic, abduction was a term used by Dr Barnardo to explain his sometimes high-handed actions in removing children from the care of their parents or relatives whom he considered their physical or moral welfare to be at risk. More than 6 per cent of the boys and 8 per cent of the girls were shipped to Canada illegally without their parents' consent. In reply to criticism the philanthropists could point to their record books and cite case after case where children had been found wandering in the streets, abandoned by their parents, forced to beg and steal to live at all.

But behind the façade of disinterested philanthropy other motives can be discerned. As the century wore on, fear of the dangerous classes provided another powerful argument for the continuation of the policy of emigration. Unemployment in Britain combined with the strong demand for cheap labour in Canada made it economically advantageous for the Dominion Government to provide subsidized travel to encourage child migration. Once in Canada the children could be either apprenticed or adopted, but as one girl put it, "Dontion, sir, is when folks gets a girl to work

without wages!". There were, however, some cases where adoption really did give a child that elusive fresh start in life. But in the main the children were boarded out until they were old enough to be indentured as apprentices and became wage earners. Although they were supposed to be treated as members of the household this seldom happened in practice.

The transition from institutional to domestic life taxed to the limit even the most skilled resocialization child's ability to endure through disruption. Many wrote later fondly of their time in British Homes, but contrast their years in Canada were filled with uncertainty and isolation. The two worlds were so different that their time (in the Homes) inevitably left children unprepared for their Canadian lives, dashed their family and Canadian hopes and misadventures.

As they grew to adulthood few of the children became farmers or farm wives as had been fondly hoped. Instead they entered factory jobs and service employment in the Canadian towns and cities. Many moved to the United States and many returned home. By the 1920s anxieties about the fate of these children were being openly expressed and in the spring of 1924 a

delegation, headed by Margaret Bondfield, was appointed to investigate the system. As a result it was decided that no child under fourteen was to be accompanied by parents, would be admitted to Canada.

Joy Parr's meticulously researched and richly documented account of this extraordinary story is essential reading for all who are interested in the history of Anglo-Canadian relations and the welfare of the children of the working class, who, graced by common difficulties, often got approval in part with their children in the last desperate hope that it would be for the best.

These children were, and still are, a major factor in the Canadian story; their descendants, now scattered throughout North America, are estimated to number over a million. Phyllis Harrison's book, *The Home Children*, tells the story of the children in more than a hundred of the Home children in their own words and gives us a glimpse of the other side of the story. The letters were the result of an appeal made in the Canadian press for information from Canadians or Americans who had come to the attention of juvenile emigrants. They have been admirably put together by Phyllis Harrison with only minor editorial changes.

The letters have a directness and strength about them which perhaps the translators of the *Book of Verse in English*, translated by Charles Tomlinson, to be published by the Oxford University Press on October 2.

"With Posele to open Poosie"—thus George Chapman on his aim as a translator of verse seems to have worked in this spirit. Chapman having fallen foul of scholars who imagined only they could possess a definitive idea of what Homer was, Dryden wrote, in his defence, "They neither know good verse nor loved it". It was out of this knowledge and the love that Rossetti declared, "The blood of rhyme and translation is this—that a good poem shall not be turned into a bad one. The only true motive for putting poetry into a fresh language must be to endow a fresh poem, as far as possible, with one more possession of beauty." To which Paster-nak adds that a translation should "stand on a level with the original and in itself be unrepeatable". So the anthology who goes to work in the light of such remarks will turn first to the great poets—say Wyatt, Jonson, Dryden, Pope, Pound—and establish his scale of values by seeing what they have made of translation.

Where to begin his choice? My own starts with Gavin Douglas's *Æneid*, completed in 1513. If it seems tedious to open *The Oxford Book of Verse in English* with a Scot, I can only reply that it was Douglas's work which first established on this island the level at which great poetry can be translated. And why not Chaucer? If Chaucer were "great translator", he translated mostly by incorporating and transforming other men's work in poems that are ultimately great originals. One could, of course, assemble fragments from here and there, including an early example of Petrarch in his *Trilogies*, but the results would be scrappy. Poets only once do we find a stretch of translation so neatly excerptable as the free version in *The Legend of Good Women* of this passage from Virgil's first book, where Aeneas and Achates meet with Venus:

So long he walked in this wilderness, Till at the last he met to huntress. A bow in hand and arrowe hoddie she; Hire clothes cutt were unto the knee. But she was yit the fayrest creature That ever was yformed by Nature; And hee was Achates she grette, And thus hee to hom spake, when she hem mette;

"Sew ye," quod he, "as ye han any of my ruston wote you besyde With any wyld be or other best?" That they han hunted to, in this forest, Ytucked up, with arrowe in hire cas? "Nay, sothly, lady," quod this Eneas; "But by thy beaute, as it thyngketh me, Thou myghtest novare erthly But Phebus eysor art thou, as I gosse. And, if to be that thou be a goddesse, Have mercy on our labour and mynne." "I nam no goddesse, sothly," quod she; "For maydane walken in this contre here, With arrowe and with bowe, in this menere." "This is the reyne of Libbo, there of which that Dido lady le and queen..." "My mastre Chaucer," writes Gavin Douglas, who knew this passage, as can be seen by comparing it with his own translation of the same incident (No. 2), where, once more, Paster-nak's translation is a little better than Chaucer's. "Poetry is not a game to be played with," says Paster-nak. "There can be no exhaustive translation from language A to language B."

Office and afford a dolly as well as a perambulator to the project of private business at all ages. The cessation in 1939 of a primary publication by Vacher only underlines the importance of this official source of information.

The high degree of technical knowledge and experience in the work of such House, which public memory agents must acquire to explain why there are so few firms in a field where the financial rewards are anyway high. Most of the firms are run by men who have been in the industry for many years, and their knowledge is often passed on to their sons or sons-in-law.

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The Grosvenor Chapel, built in 1790 is the only one of the five private chapels to survive. It was built by Ann Candler, 14th Duchess of Devonshire, and is a masterpiece of 18th-century architecture. The chapel is a fine example of the work of the architect James Gibbs. The chapel is a fine example of the work of the architect James Gibbs.

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The poet as translator

By Charles Tomlinson

"How my cup o'erlooks her brain!" reinforces the result: "The laughing Nectar overlook'd the Lid." Here Dryden appears to have advanced beyond the modesty of Paster-nak's "A Translation at the best is but a mock Rainbow in the clouds limited by a true one" towards Cowley's "I am not so enamoured of the Name Translator, as not to wish to be something Better, though it want yet a Name". Indeed, throughout the Augustan age, a philosophy of translation prevailed that permitted a wide freedom in abstracting from one's original and drew attention to its general nature rather than its local details, so that Stephen Barrett, writing *On the Epitaphs* appeared in 1750 could write of his own care to make sure of the true outline, and strong likeness of your picture; and of no great consequence, whether exactly copied or not.

In the present anthology, I have excluded large-scale works of imitation like Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes* and Pope's *Imitations of Horace*—works that bear out Johnson's own definition of imitation. "A method of translating looser than paraphrase, in which the poet is allowed to take any way they were suffered by a way un-English sensibility but sensibility that has, at last, found for itself a style in English. Like Sisson, Mrs Feinsteen knows there is no ideal model of translation and that it is undertaken in the course of a

life and amid contingencies. She is even frank enough to say: "I am not sure... how far a discussion of methods of translation attracts much useful reflection." Poems are not translated consistently. Every line proposes a new sort of possibilities." What Mrs Feinsteen aimed at, while facing this challenge, was, she says, "to be sure the total movement had been sustained." In similar vein, Henry Gifford has said that translation is, in fact, a recreation, but not of the body, introducing those versions from the nineteenth-century Russian, Fyodor Tyutchev, in which we both collaborated, he speaks of the flight or track a poem makes through the mind. "Every real poem," he says, "starts from a given ground and carries the reader to an unforeseen vantage point, whence he views differently the landscape over which he has passed. What the translator must do is to recognize these two terminal points, and to connect them by a coherent flight. This will not be exactly the flight of the original, but no essential reach of the journey will have been left out." So, in the end, for any translator, it is not a question of approaching a text with a defined method, but of eliciting definition from, and reorienting to clarify that chaos which occurs, as line by line,

Dryden long ago took on this argument when he wrote: "... a good poet is no more like himself in a dull translation than his carcass would be to his living body". And Dryden, being a poet and a person, not a mirror, admits with candour of his own translations—some of the greatest in our language—"I have added and omitted, and even sometimes very boldly made such expositions of my authors, as no Dutch commentator will forgive me."

Dryden early in his career had entered into a debate on translation begun by the Royalist group of poets—Dentham, Cowley, Fanshawe, Sherburne and Stoolery—who had been in French exile after the defeat of Charles I and thus had particular and dolly reason to think in terms of translation. Sir John Denham, in congratulating Fanshawe on his version of Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido*, contrasted his achievement with the pedantry of those who stick too closely to the original text:

That sorrell purl thou nobly dost decline, Of tracing word by word, and line by line;

A new and nobler way thou dost pursue, To make translations and translators true; They but preserve the ashes, thou the flame.

True to his sense, but truer to his fame, Dryden had been at pains to draw out some distinctions from Denham's poem and also from the pedantry to his version of Virgil's second book, in which Dido laments her fate. "Poetry is of so subtle a spirit," that, in pouring out of one language into another, it will all evaporate, and if a new spirit be not added in the translation, there will remain nothing but a caput mortuum. What would be the result? Perhaps much should be added. Perhaps one could defend Cowley's free imitations of so "wild and ungovernable" a poet as Plunder, but what of "any regular" intelligible outpourings such as Virgil and Ovid?

Dryden joined with Denham in refusing to treat "word by word, and line by line"—metaphrase, as he calls it. He distrusts imitation, or adaptation as we should say, and chooses "paraphrase, or translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view by the translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense; and that too is admitted to be amplified, but not altered." Once one has put things like this, it is not surprising to find, in his practice, to limit the element of adaptation. "I have both added and omitted," as he later confesses. Thus in his translation of Boccaccio's *Cymon and Iphigenia* appears the splendid interpolation about the illness of Rhodope ("Mount without hands, maintained at vast expense, in peace a charge, in war a weak defence"): Vulcan in *The Illiad* Book I becomes "the rude Skinkler" (a phrase purloined from the marginal gloss of Erasmus), memories of Macbeth are called on to describe the feast of the gods. "But Mirth is merr'd, and the good Cheer is lost"; Vulcan pours and Crashev's twenty-third psalm

One thing is certain—translation of poetry is essentially a compromise between the original text and the present interests and expectations of a given writer. Dryden says that the writer must be a poet. There is a difficulty here, in that some translators have shown no particular capacity as poets outside their translations, and others, like Gavin Douglas or Golding, are famous for a single extended work of translation—Douglas for his Virgil and Golding for his Ovid. Certainly our great poets have often been great translators, but perhaps the safest minimum prescription is that the translator be a poet, and as a poet so long as he is engaged in that act and art.

Jo speaking of translation as a compromise between his original and the interests and capacities of a writer, I trust the word "compromise" carries over no sense of timidity. Dryden's interest, and the present interests and expectations of a given writer. Dryden says that the writer must be a poet. There is a difficulty here, in that some translators have shown no particular capacity as poets outside their translations, and others, like Gavin Douglas or Golding, are famous for a single extended work of translation—Douglas for his Virgil and Golding for his Ovid. Certainly our great poets have often been great translators, but perhaps the safest minimum prescription is that the translator be a poet, and as a poet so long as he is engaged in that act and art.

Dryden's example what he calls "an ineluctable law", namely, "the verse translation has to be done in the only verse that the translator, at the time of writing, can make; and that if he could not make verse before he will not suddenly become so gifted because he is faced with a classical text."

How elementary and yet how salutary such reminder is when one thinks of the enormous number of translations from classical texts, ranging from the marvellous to the mushy, in which Greece and Rome were ineptly buried by earnest but untalented people—people who "could not make verse", people on whom the judgment of Sisson's "Ineluctable law" would be that no inner pressure of their own lives had revealed in them the gift of art.

It is the sense of inner pressure that makes those versions of Marina Tsvetayeva done by another British contemporary, Elaine Feinstein—translations that embody focus in the tortured years of pre- and post-revolutionary Russia, and the way they were suffered by a way un-English sensibility but sensibility that has, at last, found for itself a style in English. Like Sisson, Mrs Feinsteen knows there is no ideal model of translation and that it is undertaken in the course of a

life and amid contingencies. She is even frank enough to say: "I am not sure... how far a discussion of methods of translation attracts much useful reflection." Poems are not translated consistently. Every line proposes a new sort of possibilities." What Mrs Feinsteen aimed at, while facing this challenge, was, she says, "to be sure the total movement had been sustained." In similar vein, Henry Gifford has said that translation is, in fact, a recreation, but not of the body, introducing those versions from the nineteenth-century Russian, Fyodor Tyutchev, in which we both collaborated, he speaks of the flight or track a poem makes through the mind. "Every real poem," he says, "starts from a given ground and carries the reader to an unforeseen vantage point, whence he views differently the landscape over which he has passed. What the translator must do is to recognize these two terminal points, and to connect them by a coherent flight. This will not be exactly the flight of the original, but no essential reach of the journey will have been left out." So, in the end, for any translator, it is not a question of approaching a text with a defined method, but of eliciting definition from, and reorienting to clarify that chaos which occurs, as line by line,

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The reader on the scent

By Valentine Cunningham

V. S. PRITCHETT:

The Tale Bearers
Essays on English, American and
other Writers
233pp. Chatto and Windus, £6.50.
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Matured long ago past the stage of having to strain for a young reviewer's attention, V. S. Pritchett's criticism practices wisdom. When comes so naturally to his reviewing pen, in fact, that we end up taking his crisply sage reflections, his most assemblage asides, the continual well-tempered, unimpaired for a long time. We end the editors of the New Yorker, the New Yorker from which *The Tale Bearers* comes, have been guests (and in some cases I would guess) cricled together, are lucky still to have him about.

He's probably of necessity still hard at it, of course, for there are no occupational tensions for that. He is one of our last survivors—the old-fashioned, the old-fashioned style, the professoriate, get on with it, let them potter and pick the age of sixty-five or so. No wonder Pritchett evinces a kind of very pride in what the journalists "mill" puts the reviewer through. He upholds Greene as the typical "bookish" man who has gone through the English man's life. *Collected Essays* contain a selection of those writings from which the reviewer has picked up introductions, during the last thirty years. Greene's career, as a reviewer's wild field, he might be an instance of things good writers who, Pritchett says, "live on their own nature, and turn to anything." Pritchett, of course, so late as to let himself be carried away by anything: "And the *Seventy's* weakness is, as he suggests, that it eventually becomes a collection of 'think-places'." Pritchett's jokes are said to be occasionally dismissed as "fun of a journalistic order."

Although the reviewer who has had to keep flogging himself along for years, he always pauses occasionally over his subjects' musings. Zuleika Dobson's flagrant love, the "love pats" Bolso, Mowgli, T. E. Lawrence's beating arrangements—he never precedes that being flogged, for all his arguable pleasures, doesn't hurt.

No wonder either, then, that the last necessary academic author is rarely let off without a scathing, rolling through Pritchett's study of Beethoven, Pritchett "understood" what Max meant when he said that Beethoven's "compositional" of the period would need to be less brilliant pens than mine." Conrad's biographer, Professor Keri, makes too "many" solemn and obsequious gestures to the academy. Dr Mack, biographer of T. E. Lawrence, "is no wit." Richard Burton, "a postiferous pursuer of a footnote," had the cold academic appetite "that turns a romantic into a pedant." And Pritchett, too, says darkly, "One has often seen this happen."

Naturally enough, Edmund Wilson is the kind of critic to whom he is warm. Wilson was not, in the academic sense, a scholar of history. He was an enormous reader, and he talked to those readers who are perpetually on the scene from book to book. He was the old-style man of letters, who was not only with the crowd of the intellectual elite, but that might be a reading of Pritchett's own case—his is.

England's nearest living equivalent of Edmund Wilson. And Pritchett's criticism is always warning, like that, to aspects of authors that he himself turns out to share. He reviews James's *The American Scene*—one of the very few excellent books of travel by an American about his own country—"because of its avoidance of the sociologist's 'fact-fetichism', but also because of its spot-on actualities ('Every page contains a picture or a phrase that will bring New York, Boston, the scrub forest of New Hampshire, to the eye')."

Impressionistic exactitudes: Pritchett seeks to lay James's kind of internal immigrant of letters (the praise Angus Wilson for seeing "England with what looks like a foreign eye"), catching with that sort of impressionistic vividness the sort of material realities of books and authors. Pritchett is drawn—and draws our attention to things deliciously unimpaired by art: Kipling's chis in Max's cart; Pinere's eyebrows (described by Max as like the skins of some small mammal, just not large enough to be called a must); a drying lozenge of blood "curled up at the edges as if it were a dumb tongue"; in Kipling's story "Love-e-Women." And he's so stonch at animating things himself: James, coming to London, "ateamed positively like an engine, on a new, cheap, and depending on the presence of a character who is something like a human held-al, less a recognizable individual than a fantastic piece of burning luggage."

Pritchett not only advertises the marks of books multitudes with detail (Kipling's characters are always Edith rendered "com-ably" one of the most peopled lives lived by a man of genius"; Poyts and Swill are good because they closely recorded the multitude of "daily" acts, his own critical pages live in the edgily sharp details with which he details peoples then, he impresses us as Haggard or Greene or Burton impress him by a ruderer, collection eye. Why is he so alive? Pritchett asks about Poyts, "what made him more than a recorder, and such a recorder?" He supplies us the answer: "Vitality, and curiosity, of course. They are his own virtues: 'a myriad small interests', as he said, again about Poyts, 'keep him busy'."

Pritchett's power as critic derives from his capacity for giving himself up to "the minute and feelings and interests" of the authors he discusses. It is a process of what he calls "unselling himself." Unselling, he suggests, the strength of Henry Green's fiction. We are not surprised to find him detecting it as the method (of Edmund Wilson—inspired in his turn by his master, the master of biographical, Michlet).

I mean that he is an artist... In the sense that he is a man possessed. Give him the subject and he knows his whole person as if it were a part of himself. A Mesmer's famous magnetic fluid had flowed into him.

It is a consequence of such a saturation to the author and book at hand that no other living critic I know can tolerate one so surely, so swiftly, as Pritchett does, in the space of mere paragraph or two, into the heart of an author's life and matter.

Not that a strong sense of the critic's self does not also accompany unselling—unselling, to parody Eliot on the subject of impersonality, to only manageable by critics who have strong selves to dispose of. And Pritchett is very much himself. There is his marvellously engaging tone, for example, most agreeably unselling about going along to the column and onlivening they are on the go, they want to be cuddled, they tumble to plots, to their off or chuck lovers and play bits of Mozart. Thank goodness, and keeps thinking that he grew critics, of all sorts—Richardson, Emerson, Orwell, Lesslie's conducted their critical discourse to the talk of real people. An Edwardian himself, Pritchett is happy to ascribe to the old-style man of letters, and again, he could be describing his own method.

He was, alarmingly alive, and so fresh in the mind and voice speaking in the public

place where it disconcerted because it dodged conventional utterance. The voice was the most important thing about him and his prose; it was unofficial, conversational, free of jargon, and dropped a disident but carefully timed word or two of Edwardian slang into the solemn moments of argument. One or two of these multi-words of thought and action still not "any"; he about his own kind of mori in which he liked to be that philosophical racehorse, a possible "cari".

But like Pritchett, Pritchett can be earnest: he is quick to respond to Greene's pessimism, Beethoven's and Haggard's sadness, James's and Swift's loneliness; he speaks of "the formal melancholy" of memoirs. He is exercised by a continually strong, moral attentiveness. The English, he suggests, "live on a moral tension." He is up in "there is more magic in this," he declares of Kipling, "if it is not committed." He wants to repossess the concepts of good and evil from Greene's Catholic churches ("May not a rationalist be fully conscious of mental degradation or good and evil?").

It is a set of moral concerns which—like the alertness with which he can be depended on to pick up an author's or character's paraminical connection: T. E. Lawrence's or Kipling's mothers, Burton's wife, the theological in-thing of Poyts and Maxwell, Rolfe and Poyts—has been bred into his life. Pritchett's (on his father's side) of Yorkshire Non-

conformity. And, conscious as he is of his own family inheritance, he frequently opens his dealings with an author by accounting for the mind of William's *The Wound and the Flow* is acknowledged as the story of the wound and the flow. In his wake, Pritchett has become a connoisseur of the shaping childhood trauma. He is particularly good, as well, on the childlessness that parais in the adulthood—flag- gard's lip, Poyts's elderly English- ness ("He looked like a victim," Swift "terrible child") and his huly talk.

Not surprisingly, Pritchett has no time for the "biographical fallacy." He's full of praise for biographical critics like the Williams, Edmund and Angus, and Leon Edel. The re-covery of new Conrad letters means for him not only that Kurtz is a better life than Haines's, but that we can now get closer "to the complex interweaving of the novel's real life and temperament as they were drawn into his work." Pritchett's criticism keeps making deftly im-pressive connections between re-freshing art and his life—keeps of our best literary biographers. How cannily, for instance, he places Rider Haggard's boy-woman strain:

The Haggards had long voices; they were said in Norfolk to be able to "chat across a field" in a manner as a novelist. He wrote to no hand a long way off. Granting full weight to an author's life in some quarters he thought horror! Is "an affirmation, a moral victory paid for by immor-able, reform, by abominable sat- isfaction." It is in this that the reader has no evidence at all for Kurtz's moral victory, we defend that all the reader can know at the end of *Heart of Darkness* is Marlow's own state of mind.

The method is used far too mechanically, though. There is an absurdly complex reading of "Youth" where the act of telling is to be a desperate attempt to suppress the act of knowledge. There is nothing hidden or secret about the text of "Youth"; the middle-aged Marlow feels, and clearly expresses, nostalgia and a sense of loss, and to detect "suppressions" here is to over-ingeniously. The method does more violence to *Lord Jim*: in this novel Marlow is "single," shows "unprovoked sus- pect," and is acting out of "needless cruelty" when he tells Jim's Malay girl, Jewel, that Jim is "not good enough" to return to England. This is a pervasively driven to say this to Jewel because she fears, desperately, that Jim will leave Portocola—her fear is a perfectly reasonable fear as Euro- pean go home and Marlow can think of no other way to persuade her that Jim is unlike other men. (There is a further twist, of course, to this beautifully shipped to be comforted: Jim himself has already told her that he is "not good enough" and she has not believed him either.)

Of *Under Western Eyes* Schwarz writes that the dull anonymous Eng-lishman, the teacher of languages who, as narrator, presents the story without understanding it, is "a dynamic character who grows in stature," whose "gratuitous in-terference" is "a resource of intelligence and feeling that are unaccompanied by him." This seems to me a dog- matically mistaken reading: it may, indeed, be appropriate to read of *Heart of Darkness* as a psychologi- cal study of its narrator, and *Lord Jim* will, perhaps, justify the notion that it is really "about" Jim. I prefer to read it as a collabora- tion in which Marlow and the reader together share in understand- ing the nature of Jim's elusive per-sonality, but here the nature of the narrator-as-protagonist is being forced on to a novel which is cur-ved quite differently.

The only good points on *Under Western Eyes* are made with riv- ing force by Tony Tanner's article, "Nightmare and Complicity."

critically passed, but Pritchett's keeps putting it part of the on-ly fullness of attention and ex- tasis deserve.

Asimovically, for Pritchett, authors live in a real world, and he will make up what he can to stand something like what he means when he says that Kurtz is a better life than Haines's, but that we can now get closer "to the complex interweaving of the novel's real life and temperament as they were drawn into his work." Pritchett's criticism keeps making deftly im-pressive connections between re-freshing art and his life—keeps of our best literary biographers. How cannily, for instance, he places Rider Haggard's boy-woman strain:

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The only good points on *Under Western Eyes* are made with riv- ing force by Tony Tanner's article, "Nightmare and Complicity."

Why blur the distinction between the man and the artist in the way? It is artistic difficulty that produces this effect on Conrad's work. The blurring of the story from the ostensible protagonist to the narrating voice *Lord Jim* and *Heart of Darkness* and *The Secret Agent* is one strategy by which Conrad modifies the receiver's per-sonality to accommodate his peculiar intellect, as artist, into the human condition.

This is only the first volume of a two-part study of Conrad which makes it plain, one is assured, "explicitly and implicitly," and "gradually presents a surprising different Conrad from the one we have known." This theory of the reader, so to speak, and this reader Schwarz's first volume makes little impact. Many of its readings seem to me mis-und-standings and the best of the Conrad have been obscured into a new, more obscure, and more ac-cepted reading. It is, in fact, the writing is fairly sophisticated, but it has not found much to say

for five months of his life, Angus Courtauld was the alone, as few men have ever been, stranded in a very space under ice, frozen by tem- peratures which reached fifty-three degrees below zero. Other human beings were only present in his memories and his dreams, in his pile of news among them *The Forge* and *Wuthering Heights* and *Guy Mannering*, and in his occasional reminders of extracts from Gilbert and Sullivan.

The plan had been for Courtauld to stay on the ice-cap for only two months before being relieved by fellow members of Gino Watkins's 1930 expedition, but the weather proved a vicious and superior acquiescent. When Courtauld's three rescuers at last located the smothered station, they had plenty to fear. Would he be dead? If he were alive, would his mind have been so shattered by the nature which had entombed it for so long? As it was, their fears were ground- less: his mind was a monument to upper-class normality. "Gnt back from ice cap today," he telegraphed back to his wife-to-be, Mollie, "Fit as an orchestra. Terribly sorry such you so long without news. How are you? Send me long wire with news of you and family. Take no notice hysterical rescues nonsense. Relief carried on as part of my life programme. No danger."

Until these five months, Courtauld's life had been extraordinary but not preternaturally so—rich family, unoppressed time at Cherterhouse, two Arctic expeditions and eight months in the Sahara with Peter and Francis Rodd. As the title of the book, dealing with the man installed on the ice-cap, are tremen- dously exciting. There is a strange and dangerous domestic life, at one moment Courtauld will write in his notebook of "the things that grip the heart with fear" and at the next with completion of the book, dealing with the man installed on the ice-cap, are tremen- dously exciting. There is a strange and dangerous domestic life, at one moment Courtauld will write in his notebook of "the things that grip the heart with fear" and at the next with completion of the book, dealing with the man installed on the ice-cap, are tremen- dously exciting. 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